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In appreciation of
her folk lore, her music,
her devotion and her loyalty in
the effort to perpetuate
the history of the
American Indian
this volume is dedicated by

THE AUTHOR

HEART
OF AN INDIAN

HEART OF AN INDIAN

*A Gripping Story Based upon
A Great American Truth*

BY
ROBERT E. CALLAHAN



FREDERICK H. HITCHCOCK

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By ROBERT E. CALLAHAN

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TO
THE AMERICAN INDIANS
AND TO ALL CITIZENS WHO ARE LENDING AID
IN WINNING THEIR RIGHTS

FOREWORD

THIS story is based upon a terrible American truth.

Pause a moment and let your vision shift to the only true, the only original Americans. There lies the reason for my tale.

In our heartless material progress we never stop to think what impressions we are leaving for future generations. Far too many of us do not realize that the American Indian is, today, given no real opportunity to use his craftsmanship, his knowledge of nature, his skill in creative art toward the good of his people.

Must we leave our children and their children to stare this naked truth in the face? Must they look back and ask why did our fathers allow this noble race to die? How much longer shall we sit upon the throne of success and with listless inattention gaze down upon these helpless men—their eyes dimmed by fruitless toil and tears?

The merits of this book as a story must be left for the reader to judge. All of my characters are taken from life, although their names are fictitious. Chief Bearskin is modeled upon an Osage Chief now touring the country in behalf of his people.

THE AUTHOR.

"Whose was the right and the wrong?
Sing it, O funeral song
With a voice that is full of tears,
And say our broken faith
Wrought all this ruin and scathe
In the year of a hundred years."

—*Longfellow.*

HEART OF AN INDIAN

CHAPTER I

“WE don’t believe in God.
We don’t believe in education.

We make and obey our own laws, and if you don’t like our ways, don’t let the sun go down on you here.”

Bold and daring was the little group of white men who proclaimed this their code of living, and who in later years were to become involved in dramatic events in the Indian Nations.

In Eastern Kentucky there lies a picturesque range of densely wooded and towering mountains known as the Cumberlands, a native wilderness rich in beauty and mineral deposits, traversed by winding, shadowy streams. And these mountains have played an important part in the destiny of a race and the history of a nation.

Within these isolated boundaries, shut off from all social relations with the outside world since a century before the Civil War, there has lived, and still lives, a peculiar and distinctive type of people. They are justly divided into two classes: the good, simple and ignorant mountaineers, and the fierce, clannish, pagan and savage mountain feudsmen. There is none older nor more deadly than the Kentucky mountain feud, a relic of medieval barbarism, which can be traced back to countries across the seas.

The proponents make and obey their own laws. Frequently the sheriff himself is the leader of such a lawless band. One outstanding rule which the feudsmen will not relinquish is the privilege of avenging a private wrong, and one of the crude virtues is personal fealty. That is his sacred law, and he will tolerate no break of tie.

The Kentucky mountaineer, although pitifully ignorant, aside from the feud is good-natured, peaceful and hospitable. And, strange as it may seem, these qualities belong to the feudalists as well as to the law-abiding group. The latch-string is always out at every cabin door. Yet it is a custom, and a wise one to follow, that strangers yell "Hello" outside the gate before entering any yard, for these men are primitive and shrewd as the Indian, and suspicion once aroused seldom dies.

The lawless element is usually engaged in illicit whiskey traffic, the hills being dotted with moonshine stills; and there are those who climb the frowning walls of the Cumberland range and ambush behind trees, rocks and cabins, to wait and shoot down a government man who may have opposed or interfered with their code of life.

These malevolent people have stained that stretch of the country with blood. And among them none is better known, perhaps, than the notorious Hatfield-Hood band, which operated in the early Eighties. Following a terrific feud in Cumberland Gap, in which the elder Hatfield and Hood were killed, young Jake Hatfield and Hood's young son Silas were left in possession of their fathers' store. And in a picturesque, thread-like valley, sixty miles from any railroad, they began a domineering and lawless existence, like that of their fathers before them.

For a generation after the Civil War these people had no schools. Their ancient customs, habits and ways of living were handed down from their ancestors; many of

them lived in cabins in which their fathers and their grandfathers had been born.

There were no highways, and of course no automobiles, in those pioneer days, only mountain trails traversing Eastern Kentucky; and as for that, only one road from Elkhorn City on the south to Hatfield on the north, and from Pikeville on the west to the Virginia state line on the east.

Where these two wagon roads met each other they crossed a wooden bridge that spanned Bitter Creek, near the front of the Hatfield general store. This was a two-story frame house with pine board walls, windows with wooden shutters, and a chimney made of stones and mud, which peered high above the comb of a hand-made shingled roof—one of the few stores standing since the time of the bloody conflict between the North and the South.

Swinging from a rafter inside the store was a crude oil-cloth sign, proclaiming

“WE DON’T BELIEVE IN GOD.

WE DON’T BELIEVE IN EDUCATION.

WE MAKE AND OBEY OUR OWN LAWS, AND IF

YOU DON’T LIKE OUR WAYS, DON’T LET THE

SUN GO DOWN ON YOU HERE.”

For forty years this store had been a rendezvous for moonshiners and felons, and it was from here that the Hatfield and Hood outlaws operated. Moreover, by queer freaks of chance or circumstances at some time or other, many peaceful men had been forced to enter the fighting forces of the band, in order to protect their own homes and families from ruin.

In front of the store, beside the bridge and the cool rippling stream that was fed by mountain springs above,

were three tall trees bending at an angle of thirty degrees, and widely known as "the hanging pines"—portals of a past and the prophecy of a future, for a score of men had been strung to their branches during Hatfield's and Hood's reign of terror.

As crime increased, government men became more active, moonshining more hazardous; and with the discovery of coal mines and the advance of civilization, the rendezvous became a village, known as Lazy Point.

The hamlet stood near the sharp point of a V-shaped forest of tall evergreen trees; and this feature, combined with the illiteracy and lethargy of the place, made the name most fitting.

The inhabitants were slovenly, but their wants were few, and the people seemed contented.

A visit to the store, or to most of the cabins in the village, revealed an atmosphere of sickening uncleanness and lack of ambition; an intelligent and refined visitor would wonder how human beings could be happy in such a state of degradation. Beds were seldom aired, spider webs spanned the broken window panes, rats gnawed beneath squeaky floors or ventured into the rooms. Books were unheard of; there was no music save that of the country fiddler; the children were scantily and poorly clad and forced to go barefoot that they might become hardened and able to battle with the men of the hills. In fact, it was pellagra that caused the death of Hatfield's wife on the day her daughter was born; and it was rumored that during one of his drunken sprees he had choked his own mother to death.

In this backwoods village lived Zeke Coleman, all of his life a cripple. He was kind and generous, the philosopher of the community, never opposing or joining any faction. Everybody called him Uncle Zeke. By dealing with northern lumber and coal capitalists he had amassed

a small fortune. Uncle Zeke was now past seventy years, gray haired and feeble, and his constant decline, physical and mental, gave evidence that the end of his earthly career was near.

One day a follower of Sam Jones, the evangelist, passed through Lazy Point, and sold Uncle Zeke a Bible.

"Whut air ye gwine-a do wid hit?" asked Silas Hood scornfully.

"I'm tendin' ter read hit, Silas."

Hood only sneered.

"Ye see, 'tain't many more years on this urth for muh, an' I wanter git rite wid Gawd 'fore I die."

Hood immediately went to the store, and said to Hatfield:

"Wal, Jake, Uncle Zeke's gon' an' got relijun."

"Relijun eh!" snarled Jake.

"Yep, an' he's plumb crazy 'bout thur Bible," Hood supplied.

"Wal, we don't need sech fools 'round har, an' we won't stand fur enny preachers," returned Hatfield. No sooner had the remark left his lips than Uncle Zeke Coleman entered the store. More zealous than discreet, and resenting the peremptory command and attitude of Jake, he said, "Ye air thur pore fool, an' ye air t'ignar'nt t'knowd hit."

Hatfield looked scornfully at him.

"An' whut's more," Uncle Zeke added, pointing to the odious sign that Jake's father had made and hung to the rafter, "a durn shame t'enny man 'at calls 'emself white. An' twixt ye an thur ole devil, I kinder reckon 'ee be fust wid muh."

"Ye dad blamed ole fool!" snapped Hatfield.

"Ye knowd hit's thur truth, don't ye?"

"Git out's har, damn quick, an' buy a coffin, Uncle Zeke, cause ye hain't read'n enny Bible after t'day!"

said Jake, murderous thoughts crossing his mind, his face flushing with anger at the thought of anyone talking back to a Hatfield.

The old man hobbled out, his left hand to his back, and staring straight ahead. His expression was a combination of anger and pity.

"'Ee's a lune, I tell he," said Hood.

"Oh, 'ee's crazy as 'ell," Hatfield retorted.

"'Jes' lik ull fools whut reads thur Bible," returned Hood.

Uncle Zeke Coleman passed out of the store, down the pathway to the little shanty which he occupied alone, still staring ahead absentmindedly. He knew well the reputation of Hatfield and Hood, knew they were ring-leaders in crime, dealt in moonshine, were bold and desperate like their fathers before them. But he had always gone about his own business and his saw-mill, the only one in the county, was the only place from which Hatfield or any of his followers were able to buy lumber. Uncle Zeke had never joined forces with any lawless band, and he could think of himself as an asset to the community. Not immensely rich, he owned more good timberland than any other man in Eastern Kentucky. Then, too, he had often talked with Jake's father, and told him education and the Bible were essential to the welfare of any man; and the elder Hatfield had never resented his remark more than to tell him he had "quare idees." So he was not inclined to give serious thought to what young Jake had said to him.

But the following morning at sunrise, to the surprise and horror of Lazy Point, this gentle old man, supposedly loved by all, was no more.

The dead body of Uncle Zeke Coleman was dangling from a limb of one of the hanging pines.

CHAPTER II

THE killing Zeke Coleman created such surprise that the onlookers next morning stood aghast. And, like any other victim who had hung to the pines, he must be left strung to the limb until after dark, as a sort of reminder of the wrong he was supposed to have done. This was the rule of the ruthless band, but those who came at night for a body were never known to be molested.

That morning when Florence Bradley crossed the bridge on her way to the little school building in which she taught, and her eyes fell upon the terrible sight, she was overcome with grief and horror. It was in that very place, to that very limb, for the mere refusal of a single command, that her own father had swung some years ago, leaving her and her mother penniless. And since that fateful day, Uncle Zeke had been their comforter, their adviser, their sole aid.

Florence was of medium height and build, and possessed all the natural charms of youth. Her eyes were blue, under level brows, and her wealth of sunny gold hair hung below her knees, when loosened from its coils. Her face was sweet, though sometimes wistfully sad.

After her father's tragic death, a bitter struggle for existence followed. She was only a child when he was killed, and knew nothing of books or of school. But her mother, of good Virginia blood—the opposite of her pagan father—had taught her to read and write. Then, too, some of the more progressive families of Lazy Point

got together and obtained a private tutor for their children, and it was to this home teacher that Uncle Zeke had paid her tuition. She studied hard night and day, as well as helping her mother to do family washings, which was their only means of support. And in a few years Florence had become the teacher of the little local school.

Florence had never learned who killed her father; and she now ran quickly over to the Hatfield store, sobbing for help. But naturally neither Hatfield nor Hood would aid her. For a moment she stared at them with tear-filled eyes.

"Won't some of you take his body down?" she pleaded.

"Ye oughter knowd thur rule, Florence," said Hood.

"But Uncle Zeke never harmed a soul in his life."

"We-uns hain't a-keerin' 'bout 'at. Tain't our bizness," put in Hood.

Other men in the store only grinned and winked at each other.

"Guess thur yaller-headed kid's in love wid thur old critter," was Hatfield's cruel thrust as she started out of the store.

Florence heard the remark and turned, seeing the contemptuous grin which spread across Hatfield's face; and she recalled the many whispered rumors about his varied crimes. While she knew he was heartless and brutal, not until this moment had she suspected him of the responsibility for Uncle Zeke's death. But, as she saw it now, to express such an opinion would only endanger her life, and perhaps that of her mother. Frantically she grabbed a cheese knife from the counter, intent on cutting the rope, and raced home to break the tragic news to her mother. By the time they returned to the bridge, a crowd opposed to the Hatfield methods had gathered, and as-

sisted them in taking the body of Coleman from the hanging pines.

Having heard Uncle Zeke speak of a younger brother who had tired of mountain life when a boy, gone West, married, become a doctor and settled near the Indian Territories, and in the hope of getting news to the relative, Florence wrote to the postmaster at Muskogee, Indian Territory. But he replied that the man was unknown to him. A letter to Tulsa brought a similar answer; those to McAlester, Durant and Okmulgee in the Indian Nations brought no response. Three months elapsed.

During this time Hatfield and Hood had taken possession of Coleman's sawmill, and through a crafty attorney from Elkhorn they had deeded part of his land away. Then, on New Year's Day, a greeting card, addressed to Zeke Coleman from his brother, and bearing the postmark of Opatonga City, near the Kozart Nation, was handed to Florence by the postmaster of Lazy Point. She immediately communicated with the brother, Doctor Roger Coleman. Several weeks later he arrived in the village, with his young son, Roger, Junior.

The street dust had been laid by an afternoon shower. The sun had just passed beneath light clouds on the western horizon, thin melted sheets of gold splashed against the mirror of a purple sky. A soft and aromatic breeze from the V-shaped forest swept over the village, and the whippoorwills darted and dipped overhead. The twilight of a warm summer evening was waning and the kerosene lamps had just been touched for a faint light, as the doctor alighted from a horse-drawn rig in the main street of Lazy Point.

Making inquiries, the doctor quickly found his way to the Bradley home. There was something interesting

and striking about the stranger. His early life on the plains had given him a brown-stained face, more like an Indian's than that of his Scotch ancestors. He was tall, and carried himself with the poise and dignity of a successful man; and, while he was sad and disturbed over the loss of his brother, yet he seemed more interested in how Uncle Zeke had lived and why he was killed, than anything else.

Florence related every little incident she could remember, how good and kind Uncle Zeke Coleman had been to her and her mother; told of her father's death, what she had heard of the Cumberland Gap fight and the terrible toll of life; the oil-cloth sign on the rafter in the store, and what a desperate man Jake Hatfield had become since the death of his father.

"My brother Zeke was a fine man," the doctor said.

"His death was a terrible shock to mother and me. But no one dares to talk, everybody is so afraid of Jake," Florence said as she wiped the tears from her cheek.

"And what is the meaning of the crowd today at the Hatfield store?" the doctor asked.

"An election," Florence replied.

"What for?" Coleman asked in surprise.

"Jake's been saying the town needs a marshal to keep idlers out."

"Is Hatfield running for office?"

"No."

"Some of his friends?"

"Yes, Luke Berry."

"Say nothing of my meeting you, nor how I learned of brother's death. I know I can depend upon you, Mother Bradley, and your daughter, too," said the doctor. He then strolled over to the Hatfield store, and paused a

moment on the doorstep to listen to the vociferous crowd. Presently from their throats came a song:

"Luk's howr mar-shal—
—Treet 'em rite:
T'ell wuth relijun!
—We lik—t'fite.

Giv' us likker—
—We need naw laws;
T'ell wuth relijun
—An' gov'mnt dawgs!"

As the coarse voices died away, he heard a rag-time strain from a woman's voice:

"Hullo, muh ba-by!
Hullo, muh hun-ney!
Hullo, muh rag-time gal!
Sen' mee a kis' bah wahr—
Oh ba-by, muh hart'z on fahr—"

He then opened the heavy wooden door, and instantly sensed the atmosphere of degenerate ignorance and cruelty.

A glance showed him crude wooden shelves, filled with boxes of twist and plug tobacco, cans of snuff, cans of kerosene, bolts of flannel, percale and other materials. On the tables lay a mixture of moth-eaten coats, heavy overshoes and sides of salt pork. From behind a pile of broken bottles, empty boxes, kegs and old whiskey barrels darted a black cat in pursuit of mice. The cedar rafters were curtained with spider webs, and numerous deserted dirt-dauber dens—the mudhouse musical beetles of the Kentucky hills.

Grouped around a large stove in the center of the room stood men from the moonshine stills in the mountains; there were tall, fat, short, lean ones, mostly with

unkempt beards, silent tongues but quick-moving eyes, and each had a bottle of whiskey in one hand. Near the group of guzzlers stood an apple barrel, and perched on the top of it a woman, whose gaudy attire and audacious manner proclaimed her profession.

Silence gripped the room as Doctor Coleman's eyes followed the oil-cloth sign, and he shuddered inwardly at the thought of any American citizen so ignorant as to believe in its sentiments, or to express himself in such terms on education, the government and religion. "Do away with schools, ignore the Bible, and evade the laws, and this country would soon enter a state of anarchy and chaos worse than existed in the darkest days of Africa," he murmured to himself as he was about to turn and leave.

"Kum on back, stranger," called Silas Hood, who was a heavy-set man, with a full, round red face, big bulging eyes, a flat nose, and a mop of unruly straw-colored hair. He had a pugnacious expression, and walked with a cumbrous gait.

"Thanks," returned Coleman and halted.

"Have a drink on Luke. 'E's the fust marshal o' Lazy Point, an' a fightin' kid," said Hood, as he poured out a glass of moonshine whiskey and handed it to Coleman. But the doctor, temperate yet discreet, replied, "First refusal in ten years, fellows. Just getting over an operation and even lemonade would turn me upside-down tonight. I am Doctor Roger Coleman."

"Enny kin t' thur sawmill man?" quizzed Hood.

"Yes, a brother."

"Wall, I reckon ye knowd 'ee kicked thur bucket?"

"So I heard."

"S'pose ye knowd 'is trubble," Luke Berry drawled out.

"No, I never heard," Doctor Coleman replied, and turned to look at Berry. The new marshal, twenty-three years old, was tall, raw-boned and lanky, with stiff brown hair and gray eyes. Like his father before him he could neither read nor write. He was a guzzler, and a monomaniac against education, believing it good only for the idle rich. Since his father's death in the Cumberland Gap fight, he had become a protégé of Hatfield, and on this day he had been rewarded by the election.

"Wal, I hain't hankerin' t' tell ye, stranger, but 'ee got relijun, went krazy an' hung 'emself one night," said Luke.

"An' nobody hain't keerin' a damn," put in Jake Hatfield.

Hatfield was about six feet tall. He was broad and big, a giant in strength, with dark hair, deep-set and piercing eyes; and, despite his lack of education, he was endowed with an uncanny mind and with a propensity for power.

"Well," said Doctor Coleman subtly, "when a man starts reading the Bible and praying night and day, anything is likely to happen, fellows. And I guess Zeke's better off,—he was getting pretty old. But I must not interrupt your party, boys. Will see you tomorrow. Hurrah for Luke Berry! Goodnight." And he returned to the little hotel where he had taken a room.

The following morning in Hatfield's store, Doctor Coleman talked only of the race horses, pretty women and good whiskey in Kentucky, and denounced government activities, relating many imaginary tales of his boyhood days to Hatfield before his brother had moved to the eastern section of the state.

"Are you a son of Honest Jake?" he remarked, realizing the necessity of diplomacy.

"Wal, I dunno's anybody's ebber called 'em 'at," replied Hatfield with a conceited grin.

"But that is what my father always said of him."

"Ye know'd 'em, did ye?" asked Berry.

"Oh, my father and Jake's old man used to play the 'hosses' around Bowling Green; and I have been with your father in many tough fights, too."

"Wal, I'll be damn!" ejaculated Jake.

"Yes sir, he was a go-getter; no relation to the famous Hatfield feudalists in Hatfield County. But Jake was certainly the quickest on the draw, and the surest shot in all Kentucky."

"Did ye ebber knowd a Hatfield 'at warn't expurt wen it kum t' shootin'?" quizzed Berry.

"I should say not! Handling a gun was born in them," Doctor Coleman replied.

"Why don't ye hang out'r sign an' stick aroun', doc? Town's growin'. Soon be time fur chills an' fever. Mebbe ye kin be purty bizzy," suggested Berry.

"Ever have any sickness here?"

"Sho' tootin', an' if thur ole fokes don't git chills, I'll feed green 'simmons t' thur kids an' give 'em thur belly-ache, an' ye kin have a lut o' bizness."

"And you really would like me to stay?"

"Sho tootin', doc," said Berry.

"Folks git puny, an' we hain't got no doc 'round. I reckon ye better stay har," Hood added.

"Wal, we-uns hain't nebber gittin' sick. But, ye knowd, sum uv 'em duz. An' yer kin hav' ennethin' whut yer needs," Hatfield supplied.

Having learned, of course, that the new coal mines were the cause of a rapidly increasing population, and realizing, too, that aside from his efforts to get Uncle Zeke's property back, there would likely be the usual

amount of sickness in the spring and his services would be needed there, he said: "All right, fellows, if you promise I won't go hungry, guess I'll stay."

Three months later, through his knowledge of human nature, and the diplomatic course he had pursued, his brother's holdings were coming into his possession.

CHAPTER III

IN a short time, however, Hatfield's true nature was fully revealed to Coleman. One day a tall, hatchet-faced peddler came into the store. On his back was strapped a roll of blankets; from his breast hung a canvas bag filled with shoe-strings, chewing gum, safety pins and lead pencils. He was scantily clad, and under each arm a wooden crutch supported his weak, drooping frame of skin and bones.

As he hobbled back toward a stove, around which stood several men, an eager smile spread across the peddler's thin face, and he extended his hand, in which was clasped a package. "Won't you buy a pencil?" he asked timidly.

"No, ye ole fool. Gat a big stock on han'," said Silas Hood, pointing to a crude stand on which was a small supply of pencils.

"You, Mister?" asked the man, whose hungry lips were quivering, hope springing to his eyes, as he turned to Doctor Coleman.

"Sure, I'll take two, and keep the change," handing him a dollar bill and smiling kindly.

"Thank you! Thank you, sir."

The stove door flew open.

"Shut that door!" Hatfield shouted, as he emerged from behind the counter.

Then as the poor peddler hobbled over to close the stove door, Hatfield kicked one of his crutches from

under him and laughed jeeringly as the man fell, striking against the stove, and sprawling himself on the floor with a badly gashed and bleeding head.

Flaming with resentment at the inhuman treatment, for a moment Doctor Coleman thought only of grabbing Hatfield by the throat and choking him. But in his mind were all the events of the day he arrived in Lazy Point, what Florence and her mother had told him, the song he had heard when approaching the store, the adamant faces when he opened the door, the odious oil-cloth sign which he could never forget. "And now," he thought, "is no time to incur their enmity." In fact, he knew that any effort on his part to right the wrong would be futile. It would simply mean one man against a mad gang of ten, twenty, perhaps fifty; and he himself would be the next victim swung to the hanging pines. He gently picked up the frail, weak body, and set it in a chair.

As Coleman stepped back toward a bucket of water, intent on bathing the victim's face, Hatfield snarled, "Hell! 'Ee's jes' a Injun skunk! Pitch 'em int' thur stove an' git rid o' thur whelp!" But Florence Bradley at this moment entered the store, and raced back and stood between Hatfield and the peddler, thereby preventing Hatfield from striking the wounded man down with the butt of his revolver.

Until this remark Doctor Coleman only had given assistance to the cripple as he might have aided any other injured man; but the word "Indian" meant more to him than even the estate of his dead brother Zeke.

The doctor could not forget his experience in the Osage Nation. Here he had met and dealt with many Indians who paid their bills, kept their word, and attended to their own business; and that was certainly more than he could say for some of the white people with

whom he had had dealings. Many times he had met and talked with Chief Bearskin of the Osage tribe, who was educated and believed in the Bible, and somehow Coleman's hand of sympathy went out to the Indian tribes, who, he knew, were gradually being pushed back into obscurity and exterminated.

He knew the Osages as they really were, had found them to be loyal, true and sincere friends. And, while this bronze-skinned, thin-faced peddler did not reveal his blood, from whence he came, nor the life he had lived, the moment Doctor Coleman pulled back the slouch hat and glimpsed the victim's face, he instantly recognized him as Bryant Okema, of the Osage tribe.

After raising the body and placing the man in a chair, Doctor Coleman said, "This man is a doctor."

"Hoss doctor?" quizzed Hood.

"No, a family physician, and a good Indian."

"Hell! Who ebber heerd o' a good Injun?" was Hatfield's sardonic rejoinder.

"But he is from a refined family."

"Wot kin'?" asked Hood. "Med'cine man, I s'pose."

"No, Silas, he is not a medicine man. This fellow is a friend to the white man. But the poor fellow's mind is affected now."

"Sho tootin', ee's plum krazy, 'caus 'e tried t' sell me a diaper-pin yistuday, an' sed hit wuz a noo kinda hoss-collar," declared Berry.

Doctor Coleman bathed the man's face, bandaged it, and the peddler took his crutches and hobbled out of the store.

"It would never do to relate the history of the peddler here," Coleman thought, "for the hanging pines would surely record another victim within the day. The

teachings and beliefs of this man are the things that Hatfield despises. But no one shall ever know, and I'll take Okema with me when I leave here."

The peddler had been sent to school when a youth, then to college. He had been a brilliant medical student. But on the day of his graduation he fell from a horse, suffered a basal fracture. He disappeared, and no trace of him had been found.

Moving into Mrs. Bradley's house to board, Doctor Coleman continued the practice of medicine in Lazy Point. He also continued to relate imaginary boyhood tales while in Hatfield's presence, in order that he might retain Jake's friendship and get back all his brother's property, which he was slowly acquiring.

Meanwhile, Coleman knew the Indian's young sister had been kidnapped by a band of gypsies headed south, and he had made many secret efforts to re-establish his own identity in the mind of the peddler, but failed. The Osage talked incoherently, said his name was "Hickey," and one night mysteriously disappeared, leaving his friend sad at the thought of the Indian's destiny.

Within the next few months the little town fast approached a more civilized state, but still no one was safe to oppose or defy Hatfield in word or deed. No crime was too cruel, and none too small, for Jake's hands. For instance, one day a barefooted little boy, Doctor Coleman's young son, entered the Hatfield store carrying a white-winged pigeon which he had picked up in the muddy street.

"Wot ye got, sonny?" Hatfield asked the boy.

"Pigeon, an' he's hurt," Roger answered plaintively, looking up at Hatfield, who was staring fiercely at the little fellow.

"Lemme see."

The boy stepped back near the stove where Hatfield stood feeding stale cheese to a drowsy yellow cat.

"Tarn hit loose, an' let's see thur cat run 'em, kid."

"No, he's crippled, an' can't fly."

"Wal, s'pose hit kin run, kain't he, kid?"

"But, mister—"

"Hey, ye brat! Ye damn kids wanter larn t' mind Hatfield," said Jake, as he grabbed for the boy's arm.

"Please mister—Oh—don't! I'll take 'em home an' fix its wing," young Roger Coleman pleaded.

"Look har, ye brat!" growled Hatfield, "gimme 'at burd!"

Seizing the boy by the arm, he snatched the pigeon by its broken wing, opened the stove door and flung the crippled bird into the flames.

Submission to such cruelty was beyond human endurance, and Doctor Coleman made up his mind to leave Lazy Point. He had not secured all of his brother's holdings from Hatfield, but what he had was offered for sale at public auction, in order that he might return to a country where men were really brave.

It was a sad day for Florence and her mother when he sold his brother's home for half its worth, took the money and young Roger, and started back to Opatonga, near the Kozart Nation. But on the day he left, the things he had heard and learned to be true were related to the Bradleys, that they might serve as a guidance to them in the future. "Jake is more dangerous than you will ever know," he said to Florence. "Don't ever trust him—any time, anywhere."

"I don't, and I won't," Florence assured him.

He told her that he had learned Hatfield's Creole housekeeper, Mary Dixon, had given birth to a boy, and

that Jake had paid a price to have the child stolen and taken beyond his mother's reach. Then, when Coleman told Florence that Hatfield had kept an Indian maiden in his home, who, at the age of fourteen, had become a mother, both she and her mother were horror-stricken.

"Won't you try to find Florence a school out west?" asked Mrs. Bradley.

"Yes, I can, and by the first of the month I will write her definitely about it," he informed her.

"Goodbye, and God bless you. We will be ready to come any time," Florence concluded, with an appreciative smile.

The rattling buggy carrying father and son rolled over the bridge by the hanging pines, en route to the nearest railroad point some sixty miles away. Doctor Coleman looked up at the three stately trees, and tears filled his eyes. He looked at the V-shaped forest, and vision flashed quickly through his mind—scenes he hoped never again to view. Then he gazed down on the streets below. But one sweet and pleasant picture could he take away. It was the waving handkerchief of Mrs. Bradley over the picket fence, and her beautiful daughter Florence, with outstretched hands, saying farewell.

Days went by, but no letters came from the doctor. Weeks, then months elapsed; but letters Florence wrote brought no reply from the man who had assured her of a school in the West. Remembering one day having heard Doctor Coleman speak of an Indian Chief, she wrote a letter to Chief Bearskin of the Osage tribe, and within ten days she received an answer in which the Chief said that Doctor Coleman, en route from Kentucky, was waylaid by bandits, who robbed and shot him, and that the young son was now in the Chief's care and would remain there until old enough to make his own way.

CHAPTER IV

THE following year saw many changes in Eastern Kentucky. Healing springs were discovered among the sloping foothills of the Cumberland range; greater coal mines than heretofore were developed; land values doubled overnight; northern capital began to realize the wonderful resources, and bought up all available land. A railroad was building across the country, with the natural result that roads were somewhat improved; the distilling of moonshine was less evident, and most of the bandit type in Lazy Point were forced back into the hills for their nefarious pursuits. The erection of sanitariums, hotels, summer cottages and places of amusement were other signs of progress.

Among the first to be cured by the healing waters was the Indian peddler, who the old-timers thought had been killed by Hatfield's band. In fact, he alone made the discovery, which was the immediate cause of prosperity and increasing population in Lazy Point, to which place he returned to become the local doctor. Apparently he had recovered from the trouble which had clouded his mind, yet he had not yet fully regained his memory, still claiming his name was "Hickey," and that he was from Ohio and had no relatives living. As he was a master of words and a capable doctor, the public as a whole considered the old story of Doctor Coleman false. Being the only physician in the fast-growing town, and having quickly established a reputation, Hickey went about his

duties, unmindful of the idle gossipers who flung jokes at him and told many absurd tales of the canvas sack, shoe strings, safety pins and lead pencils he once carried on his back. Noon or night, tired, sleepy or hungry, Hickey gladly responded to all calls of the sick. Often he attended cases where he knew no remuneration would ever be offered him.

The majority of the new people in the rapidly growing hamlet knew the value of books, music and law. A church and a new school had been built. Florence Bradley was the teacher, and known as the village belle. She was practical, beautiful and talented, qualities which made her pursued by many of the men, among whom were Jerry Hodges, the postmaster; Frank Peterson, a traveling salesman; and Luke Berry, the young town marshal. None of them, however, seemed successful in winning her heart, for she was entirely platonic with Hodges, seldom in Peterson's company, for he called only once or twice a month, and her attitude toward Berry was more like that of a sister than a sweetheart. But a surprise was in store for everyone.

Winter had passed like a ghost in the night, and an early morning shower had left tiny drops of water clinging to the pines like miniature icicles in a morning sun. Fruit trees were covered with blossoms; garlands of old-fashioned roses wafted up their fragrance on the soft, balmy air, and the chirping bluebirds flitting in the warm sunshine were a further indication that spring was here. It was Friday, and Luke Berry's birthday, a romantic and memorable one for him, for on his way to town Florence Bradley met him at the bridge and pinned a red rose on his shirt.

With a flirtatious glance, she surprised him as she suddenly asked, seriously, "Luke, do you really love me?"

Luke's heart choked his voice. "Yer knowd I luv ye, Florence, ebber sin' I kin r'member. But I kinder figger yer hain't keerin' enny fur muh."

"Yes, but I do, Luke."

"I hain't wantin' ter brag enny, but I kin make yer happy, Florence, if yer lit muh."

Florence hung her head.

"An' I ax ye agin—won't ye marry me?"

Florence did not answer, but took hold of his hand.

"I'm plum krazy 'bout ye, Florence, an' yer knowd hit, an' I kin make yer luv me ef yer lit me sum day."

"But I do care," Florence supplied.

"Thar hain't nobody, I reckon, 'at luvs ye lik' I do. Whut d'ye say?"

Florence lowered her eyes for a moment, squeezed his hand, and said, "I will answer you after school, Luke. Meet me here at four o'clock." Then she turned and walked away.

The next morning the little hamlet awoke from its lethargy to learn that Florence Bradley had gone to Pikeville and married Luke Berry; and upon the return of the apparently happy couple Sunday evening, buckets, pans, chairs and tin cans, horns, sticks, brooms and rusty stovepipes, all went to make up a noisy band that serenaded them until a late hour in the night. It was a startling surprise, especially as it was only two weeks until her school term was to close. No one thought she loved Berry. Some said Jerry Hodges had spurned her love, others exaggerated what they had heard, and soon the idle gossipers spread tales of a blasted romance. Rumors even circulatd that there was some connection between the fact that Frank Peterson had suddenly quit his job in Elkhorn and gone away, and Florence's sudden marriage.

Two weeks later Doc Hickey was called to the Berry cottage by Florence. He found her worried, embarrassed and evasive. Her turbulent mind and the articles he glimpsed partially hidden on a table near her bed revealed that she had thought herself in a serious state.

"What have you been taking?" Hickey asked.

Florence hesitated, became nervous and irritable.

"Listen, my child," Hickey said in a serious voice. "Don't ever do a thing like this again. It will injure your health."

"But I have such an awful cold, Doctor, I simply had to do something," Florence said, evading his sympathetic gaze.

"Don't you like children, Florence?"

"Oh yes, certainly, Doctor, but Luke—"

The sentence went unfinished, and the reflections of rumors afloat moved swiftly in Hickey's mind. Her stammering, pausing and flushing caused his own soft heart to feel sorry for her, and he tried to assure her that she was suffering for no good reason.

"Do you think I will be all right, Doctor?"

"Certainly—why not?"

Eyeing him askance, and wondering if he suspected her in any way, "Oh, I don't know, doctor," she said. "You know, Luke has been drinking heavily. When we married he promised to quit drinking, but he has been getting worse."

During the ensuing months, Florence manifested a deep interest in the effort to teach Luke to read and to write; but his indolent mind, his interest in drink, and the pals of his boyhood days dominated him. None of his companions could read or write; in fact, they resented any expression of schooling, and since Hatfield upheld them it was but natural that Luke was often rallied for

marrying Florence. Yet his true love and loyal devotion to his wife was an outstanding feature of his simple, ignorant life, and he was kind, considerate and good to her.

However, Luke's growing desire for drink and his increasing intimacy with the Hatfield faction caused Florence to grieve. Added to this worry was the knowledge of the coming child. Daily she prayed, and at night lay awake, hoping the baby would not resemble the one she thought to be its father, while Luke snored away beside her.

Early in November Doc Hickey was again called to the Berry cottage, this time to attend the birth of a baby daughter, whose little life was destined to great sadness in the years to come.

Florence smiled and tried to appear happy. But hardly had the crimson shadows of sunset faded in the west before gossiping women began to talk, some saying the child was the image of Jerry Hodges, others claiming Frank Peterson must be its father. A few whispered that Hickey had boarded at the Bradley home many months, was attentive to Florence, and knew more than he would ever divulge. None of them believed Berry responsible for the baby's birth. Only a few of Florence's friends called to see her, and those who did went away whispering to each other about the baby's nose, the fingers or the shape of its head. Luke, however, proud of the child, boasted among his pals of being a father.

"What have you named the youngster?" asked Hickey one day when he called at the Berry home, about four weeks after the baby was born.

"Hain't named 'em yit," answered Berry.

"Not him—it's her, you mean," said Florence, smiling to conceal the sadness within her heart.

"Shore, I plum fergot. 'Ow's Lucy?" Luke suggested.

"Sounds too old," replied Florence.

"Barbara?"

"Too foreign and strange," Hickey objected.

"Ah, we-uns hain't nebber 'ad enny befo'. Ye name hit, Doc," said Luke, biting at his plug tobacco, a grin spreading over his freckled face.

"Do you really want me to?"

"Yes," Florence quickly agreed. "You name her, Doctor."

"Well, I shall give her an unusual name—Wathena. It is an Indian name."

"Wathena, Wathena. Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed Florence.

"Nah purtier'n thur kid," declared Luke, chest swelling and his brown hair standing stiff and straight on his head.

"It really is an interesting name," Florence added. "I like it."

"Beautiful, mystical—a face and a name no one could ever forget," murmured Hickey, as he closely observed the infant's perfect features and well-formed little body.

As the weeks went by and the baby was old enough to be wheeled around in a carriage, Florence felt keenly the aloofness of her friends, and often wept over the insolent stares of the neighbors.

On Christmas Eve, when Luke was up town buying a rattle for the baby he so adored and was so proud to call his own, he was approached by Jerry Hodges, who inquired, "Say, Luke, how long have ye bin married?"

"Bout nine months," said Luke boastfully.

"How old's thur kid?"

"Two months," reported Luke.

"Ebber read a med'cine book, Luke?"

"Nah!"

"Better read one," was Hodges blunt suggestion.

"Why?" Luke questioned in a puzzled manner.

"Oh nuthin'. Jes wonderin'."

The subtle insinuation apparently had its effect. As Luke sauntered out of the store back toward home, he began to think; and for the first time in his dull life a glimmering of the processes of human evolution dawned upon him. He recalled certain things he had heard the old folks discuss. But, unable to read or write, he was afraid to question, though his suspicions had been aroused. He went home puzzled, but said nothing to Florence concerning Hodges' remark.

The days that followed found Luke dubious, less considerate and acting queerly, causing Florence to worry. So distressed was she that one day when she glanced out of the window and saw Luke returning home in mid-afternoon, she became nervous and badly frightened.

"He's never home until six," she murmured to herself, and trembled in fear as premonitions of impending danger seized her mind. "Oh, my God! Luke knows,—yes he knows! He's coming, he's coming!"

She recalled the days when Luke had seen her with Frank Peterson, how jealous Luke had been, and how he had sworn he would kill any man who insulted her. Then, too, with a deeper sense of fear, she remembered that Luke had said if she ever lied to him he would kill her. She arose quickly as he walked through the picket gate. He stepped onto the porch and inserted his hand in his hip pocket, as though to withdraw his gun. Conscience-stricken, as he entered the room, and thinking of what Luke would do if he knew the truth, Florence rushed

toward him, exclaiming, "What's wrong, hon? What's the matter?"

His hand still in his pocket and staring at his wife, he asked in a puzzled tone, "Whut's thur matter, kid?"

Every moment seemed an hour to her, and in her suspense and fear she turned deathly pale as Luke stepped nearer. But, instead of drawing a gun, to her surprise he merely removed his handkerchief and put his arm around her waist.

"Whut's thur matter, kid?" again he asked her.

"Oh, nothing, Luke."

"Hain't ye feelin' right?"

"No," she answered in a nervous tone.

Luke stared at her frightened face. "Sug'r! Air ye sick? Wy doncha tell me? Yer plum funny," he implored.

Florence only stared back. But presently he noticed she was holding a handful of letters behind her. "Who air them letters frum?" he inquired.

At first a stricken conscience caused her to be recessive and evasive. "Oh, they don't mean anything, hon," she replied, her mind moving swiftly in an effort to deceive. Not that she wanted to be deceitful—Oh, no! But those letters—with endearing terms, Frank's promises, and that last letter, the one in which he told her he was not to blame, that there were other men. "Oh, God," she murmured, "he mustn't see that one—none of them!"

For a moment Luke stood and waited impatiently for an explanation. "Wal, wy ye actin' so dad blame funny?" he inquired abruptly.

Florence could think of no good reply. "Take the baby a minute. My head hurts," she said. Confused, tortured, thinking only of destroying the evidence, she

ran to the front room and threw the bundle of letters into the stove.

Seized with a desire to assert himself as a husband and get a definite answer, Luke savagely grabbed her by the arm, exclaiming, "Gol darn! Ye gotta tell me!"

"Don't, Luke, you hurt my arm!" she cried out.

But her refusal to answer had thrown him into a state of emotion that divested him of all reason or consideration. His body trembling, his voice rising in anger, and giving her a vicious jerk, he exclaimed, "Tell muh, by Gawd, or I'm goin' pitch thur kid outa thur winder!"

"Oh, my God!" Florence screamed.

"Hain't ye goin' t' tell me?"

"There's nothing to tell," she said.

Luke tightened his grip.

"Oh, merciful God! You're killing me!" she cried, and fell to her knees.

Wathena was now in spasms of crying. Luke raised his hand to strike Florence down, she moved her head to avoid the intended blow, and he tripped over a chair. The baby fell from his arms, face downward, its little head grazing the edge of an iron bed. But as Luke loosened the rigid grip with which he had held her, Florence reached for the falling child and caught it only a few inches from the floor, clutched it to her breast, and rushed into the adjoining room, closing the door behind her.

Luke reflected a moment, then lifting his eyes to the street which passed his home, he saw Doc Hickey coming through the gate. As Hickey entered the porch, Luke turned and made his exit through the rear door, walked around the house and started toward town.

CHAPTER V

HELLO! Anybody home?" asked Hickey, as he stepped upon the porch.

"Yes, come in, Doctor," replied Florence.

Hickey entered, and as he turned to close the door saw Luke walking rapidly away.

"Hello! Why the hurry?" he called to him.

"Go t' hell! Ye Injun peddler," was the sharp reply.

Hickey bit his lips, and watched Luke as he walked rapidly up the street and turned the corner without glancing back. He knew it was the beginning of trouble in the Berry home. But he was smiling, his face radiating friendship as he sat down. From his pocket he took a rattle for the baby. It was red, the handle black, and the name "Wathena" was printed on the ball. As Florence emerged from the bedroom with the sobbing child in her arms, Hickey said:

"This I give to Wathena. Her Indian name means truth, loyalty and devotion to those they love. And Wathena is all the name implies." The noisy and pretty rattle quickly brought the baby into a playful mood. Then Hickey turned to the mother, and said "Listen, Florence, you need not explain everything, but in the interest of your health, your happiness and the future of your child, tell me the truth. What have you told Luke?"

"Tell you what?"

"You know what I mean, Florence."

His eyes told her he was the family's friend. He

was a doctor, and there was no use trying to mislead him. "Still," Florence thought, "I have destroyed the letters. So why should I tell him?" And she flung her head high in defiance of Hickey's request, saying, "I have done nothing, doctor."

Hickey smiled, reached for his hat, extended his hand, and said, "All right, Florence. But remember, child, if you ever need me, I will come."

As she watched his tall, thin, alert figure strolling down the street, she knew in him she could place implicit faith. And yet she had refused to tell him the truth! But the memory of the doctor and his friendly eyes would live forever with her. Alone once more, Florence began to wonder. "What is Luke thinking about?" kept racing through her mind. "Does he know anything? No, of course not—how could he? The letters are burned—how could he know?" And now she must be content to await his return and the consequences.

While Florence was troubling over the outcome of her own predicament, Berry had entered the Hatfield store with a worried expression on his face.

"Whut's the matter, Luke? Got a tip on a bank robbery?" solicited Hood, who was standing behind the bar.

"Wuss!" exclaimed Luke. "Marreed, an' gotta kid—runs a feller krazy. Thur brat's bin bellerin' all day. Hadda leave 'ome, kain't stan' a yellin' all thur time. Gimme a drink, Silas."

Luke's attitude added speed to Jerry Hodges' buzzing wheel of gossip, and everyone was soon discussing the scandal and expecting a separation.

During that afternoon Berry was in a confused state of mind, and walked up and down the street many times, thinking of the letters and wondering who wrote them. He drank a great deal, finally went home and began to

accuse Florence of infidelity. For days he made her life almost unbearable.

Upon hearing that Luke was again on a drunken spree, and that he had not been home for days, Doc Hickey called at the Berry cottage to see if he could give any aid.

"I'll lose my mind, I believe," Florence declared.

"Worry will do you no good," said Hickey.

"I can't help it, Doctor."

"Is Luke suspicious of you?"

"Yes," she finally mustered up courage to say.

"Then that is the reason for his actions of late?"

"Yes,—but he doesn't know anything."

With no intention of quizzing or persecuting her, but only that he might explain and satisfy Luke if the occasion demanded it, he asked, "Was it Peterson who deceived you?"

Florence hesitated, then hung her head. "Yes, Doctor. But I couldn't help myself," she cried.

"I understand," Hickey said consolingly.

"Oh, I have wished a thousand times I was dead. He came one night and told me to pretend to Mother I had a headache. She went to church and left us alone. I believed everything Frank told me. He said he loved me and could not live without me. And afterward, I was afraid to tell Mother. Oh, I can see through it now—he didn't care, he didn't love me!"

"I am sorry, Florence."

Between sobs she cried out, "He said he would come for me the next Saturday, and we would be married. But he never came back."

Hickey closed his lips and sighed.

"He always talked of his mother, their fine home, and how much he loved me. And then—Oh, that dread-

ful night! It seems only yesterday," she cried. "I wanted to die."

"But Luke loves you, Florence."

"Yes, I know. Luke was always asking me to marry him, and I know he loved me. But I guess I did wrong to marry him. We are both unhappy."

"Have you ever told Luke anything?"

"Of course not. He would kill me."

"Has Luke asked you anything, Florence?"

"Only about some letters."

"Did he know what was in them?"

"No, Doctor. You know, Luke can't write his name. But one day when he came home I threw some letters into the fire and he has been accusing me ever since."

"Well, Florence, don't tell Luke anything. Admit nothing—understand me?—nothing! I will help you some way."

And then, as though her heart would break, Florence cried, "God knows, life is hard enough, Doctor. If it weren't for the baby,—my own sweet little Wathena,—I'd be ready to give up, to die and be out of this misery."

"Yes, but you must live for your child," said Hickey. "She is your flesh and blood. You must not think of leaving her in this cruel world without a mother."

Frantically wringing her hands, tears falling unheeded from her eyes, she cried, "Oh, I don't know what to do, Doctor! I'm afraid I'll go crazy!"

"No, you are all right, Florence," Hickey assured her. "But one thing is certain—you must quit worrying, get plenty of air and sunshine, nourishing food, and try to forget Peterson. Live in hopes of making Luke forget, and break him of the whiskey habit."

"I do try," she said softly, her voice almost dying out.

The next day Luke came home before lunch, prepared

his own meal, left the house without speaking to Florence or seeing the baby, and a week went by without his taking a sober breath or returning home at night. Instead, he slept either in the home of Hood or Hatfield; and had it not been for the friendship and favors of Hickey, Florence and her child would have been in want. During the second week of his debauchery, Luke spent some nights with his illiterate mother, who accused him of being crazy for marrying Florence, adding she was unworthy of being his wife.

"Hit hain't fittin' fur ye," his mother told him.

"But I luv thur kid," he said remorsefully.

"Ah! 'Tain't yer brat."

"Wal, it kinder looks like muh, maw."

"Fur gad sakes! 'At brat hain't nary seed a day like yer maw an' paw. Thur brat luks lik' 'at sorr'l-headed Peterson."

"But I outter stick t' hur, maw. She's my wife."

"Hur don't keer a bit fur yer. I reckon ye gonna git wuss, lik' yer old paw. Ye bin ruin't by an eddicated woomin. So git out o' har, an' stay out!"

His mother's turning against him carried his thoughts back some years, when just before his father passed away he called Luke to his side and told him there was a God, that he believed in schools, and that he had been forced to join the feudsmen by the demands of his wife's clan-nish people. This alone, as he saw it now, was cause for remorse, so Luke returned home to his wife and child.

Apparently reconciled to his fate, weeks and months went by without a repetition of his drunken spree. Luke was happy, for Wathena had begun to walk and talk, and was the pet of the neighborhood. Some rumors were still afloat, but many of the old-timers had moved away, many changes had taken place, and the new people now

inhabiting Lazy Point were neither inclined, nor had the time to, discuss the past. Thus it was, with newly made friends and the love of her baby, Florence looked upon a brighter future, and was doing her best to make Luke happy and to break him of his craving for drink.

The newer and better educated population, money and competition, quickly pushed the Hatfield group from the power they had held since the Civil War. The drowsy village, with its many new buildings, school, church, telephone exchange, electric lights, sidewalks and paved streets, had taken on an aspect of progress, and was now a thriving, booming little city. Law and order were taking the place of pagan and atheistic creeds, and because the primitive woods of Eastern Kentucky no longer afforded them the freedom they most desired, and since everyone was talking of the mineral and oil possibilities throughout the Kozart Nation, saying that it was a country of no laws, few railroads and many ignorant people, Hood and Hatfield made plans to move to the Indian country.

The very word "Kozart" was magical, and was on the tongues of thousands who wanted to know more about the Indian Nations. Since the opening to the white settlers in other territories, there had been a constant stream of men pouring into the Kozart country in quest of fame and fortune, and Hatfield thought of the Indian Nations as a place of opportunity and little law.

Known of only by his most intimate feudalism friends, Hatfield had made a visit to the Indian country, and while there saw vision of power and fortune beyond the conception of the ordinary mind. And he had consummated a deal that would take him West.

Silas Hood's brother Claud, who was a Kozart agent,

was en route to Kentucky to accompany Jake and Silas back to the Indian Nation.

"So yer gwine t' sell out," said Luke one day, when he saw Hood and Hatfield scribbling their names on a bill of sale covering their store.

"No, jis' givin' hit 'way," remarked Hood.

"Sho' gwine-a miss ye fellers," Luke drawled.

"Yep, but we're kinder glad t' git out, Luke. Thur ole place hain't whut she uster be. Hit's plum full o' Yank teachers an' preachers, an' we're leavin' morro' mawnin'."

"Whar ye gwine?"

"Thur Injun kuntry."

"Whar's 'at?"

"Kozart Nation," replied Hood. "Claud sez we-uns'll be rich in two years."

"An' whun we git rich out thar, we'll fetch yer out, Luke," Hatfield supplied.

"Sho' tootin', an' I'll kum enny time," said Luke, as he listened to the alluring tales of imaginary wealth pictured by Claud.

The following morning the few remaining Hatfield followers clamored around two covered wagons, which were loaded with bedding and supplies for the western trip, a water keg fastened on the side, a bundle of wire, an ax and a lantern swung from the back. In one wagon were Silas Hood and his brother Claud; in the other Jake Hatfield and his eight-year-old daughter Edna; and in the rear seat, where she could not be seen, Blanche Okema, his Indian concubine.

No tears were shed, and no hearts were sorrowful, as the two loaded wagons rolled away, for most of the people were glad these men were leaving the state. As

the wagon drew up near the Berry cottage, which was on the new highway out of town, Jake called "Goodbye, Florence," as he and little Edna waved a farewell.

"Good luck," Florence replied, her voice vibrant and her face radiating sunshine, for to her it was the happiest day in years. Nothing had ever brought her such joy, for she knew Hatfield's power of evil over Luke. With Hatfield gone, she believed Luke would be different, and a better man. Then, too, the precocious Edna, merely a child of eight, in a slurring way had once pointed her finger at Wathena and told her Luke was not her father. Of course, Wathena was too young to understand the meaning of the contemptuous remark; yet in Edna's black, piercing eyes even at that early age was shown the true heredity of the Hatfields.

But in these moments of regretful reflection, little did Florence think that in the years to come Edna's beauty, her nature, and her father's political power would cause heart-rending scenes, break down her own health, and leave Wathena stranded on the stormy seas of grief and love that torture the human soul.

CHAPTER VI

ABOUT two years after Hatfield and Hood had left Eastern Kentucky, Luke Berry was called to Pikeville as a witness in a murder trial. Since Hatfield's departure, Luke's treatment of Florence had been irreproachable. Daily he played with Wathena, and the Berry home was one of joy and peace. But the hand of fate, that often strikes the innocent man or woman, was to cast Florence's lot again into paths of sorrow. As Luke mounted the courthouse steps in Pikeville, he came face to face with Frank Peterson, whom he had never trusted but always despised. Peterson was flashily dressed, and his effrontery left a sting as he paused a moment, extended his hand, and exclaimed, "Hello, Luke! Understand you're a daddy now."

For a moment everything went black. Then suddenly flashed through Luke's brain thoughts of the baby's golden hair, her straight little nose, her forehead, dimples, her long, slender fingers. Wathena, three years old, as he saw it, was the image of this man before him. It all came back now—what his mother had said, how Jerry Hodges had acted; the letters—why had Florence flung them into the fire?

"I'm a dad blamed fool! I kain't read, kain't rite, an' hain't gat nary speck o' book larnin'," were the thoughts piercing his dull brain as he stood staring at the traveling salesman.

"Is your memory bad?" Peterson asked brazenly.

Luke's lip quivered, and his face was rigid. He did not reply. He could think only of the letters. Perhaps they had been from different men, letters that could have revealed many things—with whom Florence had been, certain acts, certain promises. And still he stood staring.

"So you don't remember me?" Peterson asked, as he observed Luke's look of shame.

Then Peterson smiled, and, with a knowing expression, said, "Wonder what the kid looks like." He turned, walked across the street, climbed into a buggy, and drove away.

Luke's confusion grew into rage as he leaped on his horse and started homeward. "I'll whop Florence, by Gawd! I'll kill 'er!" he mumbled to himself.

That night a storm came up. Doc Hickey on his way to the drug store passed the Berry cottage just as a flash of lightning illuminated the street, and he was startled to see Luke gallop wildly up to the gate, leap from his horse, and, gripping a gun, wobble down the walk toward the rear of the house. Remembering Luke's temper when he was under the influence of drink, and fearful that he might attempt to shoot his wife or baby, or both, Hickey rushed to the front door, opening it without knocking. He went into the dining-room where Florence was sitting with Wathena in her arms. Grasping her by the shoulder he whispered, "Don't make a scene! Luke's drunk—got a gun. Take Wathena—quick! Go to your mother with the child. I'll take care of Luke. If I turn the lamp low, you'll know he's all right. Then hurry back, and be here when he returns."

Florence took the child and hurried away. Then Hickey stepped back onto the porch, and called, "Hello! Anybody home?" Hearing the knock and recognizing the voice, Luke slipped his gun into his holster, and came

around to the front of the house, staggering upon the porch. "H-hel-lo,—D-doc," he said.

"Hello Luke, have you been away?"

Reeling under the influence of drink and a sudden attack of hiccoughs, Luke mumbled, "Yep, bin up,—er—up—up t'—t' Pike—er—vi—ville. Hain't Florence an' thur kid—'ome?"

"I don't know. Is the door locked?" Hickey asked.

"Yep," Luke blurted, then threw his big frame and square shoulders against the door, bursting it in and exclaiming, "By Gawd! 'at's thur way I git in wen they 'on't hopen 'em hup!"

"I guess Florence and the baby are at her mother's. She was sick today. Let's go uptown," suggested Hickey.

"Sho,—sho—too—tootin', I'll go," Luke replied.

More crazed by jealous illusions than by the drinks he had taken, Luke soon sobered in Hickey's company, and they returned to the house to find Florence sitting in a rocking-chair holding Wathena and reading stories to her.

"Whar ye bin?" quizzed Luke.

"I was over at mother's. She stuck a nail in her foot today."

"Wal, hit won't hurt hur enny," Luke said scornfully as he sat down and struggled with a broken bootjack, trying to divest himself of mud-soaked, slippery tight-fitting boots. Very soon he retired to the adjoining room and went to bed, while Hickey talked with Florence and played with Wathena. Hickey always found solace in the companionship of Florence and the sweet innocent child.

Luke's term as city marshal was soon to end, and it looked as though Jerry Hodges, his opponent on the election ballot, was sure to win. This disturbing thought, coupled with the tantalizing remarks of Peterson, so con-

fused and incensed deluded Luke, that he could arrive only at one conclusion—Wathena was not, could not be, his child!

He began drinking again, became abusive and violent at times, remained away from home many nights, ignored the pleas and advice of friends, and indulged in such debauchery that Florence was in constant fear of what the future held. Night after night her lights burned until dawn, and she spent sleepless hours in worry and grief.

One day, while Hickey was in the Berry home pleading with Luke to abandon drink, Luke turned inquiringly to him, saying, "Doc, I wanta git thur truf."

"What is it, Luke?"

"Wal, will ye tell muh?"

Hickey paused a moment, thinking, "He's not down, but just soused enough to ask me questions he would not mention if sober." But he said, "Certainly. What is it, Luke?"

"Well, say doc, I—I reckon ye know'd Tom Dawson gat marry'd afor' me an' Florence did, an' his kid warn't bawn til after Krismus."

"That's nothing strange," Hickey quickly replied.

"Wal, hit's kinder funny to me."

"Nothing funny about that. You are not a physician, Luke."

"Wal, doc, some wimmen 'ave funny de-zeeses, I s'pose."

In the effort to ward off any suspicion that Luke might have, Hickey said, "It's no disease, Luke. You might suffer from some idiosyncrasies yourself; or you might have paraplegia. But you would not be able to determine the pathological conditions."

"Aw, hell! Ye bin eatin' fish'ooks, doc."

A little later, seeing Luke was sobering now, Hickey stepped into the adjoining room, bade Florence goodnight and went home. But the moment Hickey left the house, Luke turned to Florence, and said, "So hit warn't me ye luved, wuz hit?"

"I don't understand you," Florence said.

"Yis ye do, an' so'll thur kid wen she gits ole 'nuff."

"What do you mean, hon?"

Indignantly he went on, "Guess they all had ye." Then he shot one fast question after another—biting questions, the kind that hurt and burn deeply, causing the color to mount the cheeks of a sensitive woman.

"What has come over you, Luke?" Florence asked, tears creeping into the corners of her eyes.

"Ye're jis' a kummon strumpet, 'at's ull. An' ef 'twarn't fur thur kid, I'd leave ye t'morra. Y'ain't fittin' t' raise a kid, ennyhow."

Picking up Wathena and clutching the child closely to her breast, Florence, filled with anger and resentment, stepped forward, clenching her right fist as though to strike him for his slurring remarks. But she was neither quick enough, nor strong enough, for Luke, noting her intention, instantly arose and struck her in the face, then turned and stalked out. This was the beginning of daily quarrels, accusations and sorrow in their home.

One night some weeks later, while Luke was out of town, little Wathena came to her mother and complained of pain. Florence thought it only a minor ailment, not dreaming that it was the incipency of a fever.

"Where does it hurt, darling?" she asked, feeling the cheeks, then the pulse.

"Right here, muvver," said Wathena, holding her tiny hand to her head. Florence put her to bed and summoned

Hickey. By the time he reached the house, the child's temperature was high, but with the aid of ice packs the fever began to recede, and Hickey departed. But the following day the baby was worse, and throughout the night no change was shown in her condition.

In the morning Hickey returned.

"What is the matter?" Florence asked anxiously.

"She has scarlatina, and she must be kept quiet. It is scarlet fever in a mild form, but with proper care we can ward off the disease," Hickey told her.

Luke had returned the second day of the baby's illness and spent the night at home, but got up the following morning, took a drink, and walked out without seeing the child or asking about her.

Wathena's condition grew worse, and at night her temperature shot up to a hundred and three, remaining at that critical point for two days. On the fourth night, without an hour's sleep for three days and nights, and completely exhausted, Hickey turned to Florence and whispered, "I am afraid the end has come. Be prepared, Florence."

"Merciful God!" she murmured weakly. "Surely the Lord will not take my baby away."

"Keep your courage," urged Hickey.

"But I can't bear it—I just can't stand it, Doctor!" I don't want to live if Wathena is taken from me. She's all I have. I tell you, it will kill me!"

"But you must be brave, and pray," said Hickey.

For three days and nights Florence had worried, wept and prayed; had not left the room nor taken her eyes from the face of her beautiful child. Added to this sorrow was Luke's neglect and indifference. She was on the verge of a nervous collapse, and Hickey pleaded with her to leave the room and get a breath of fresh air.

"I can't! I can't leave her!" she almost shrieked.

"I have done all that any doctor could do, Florence," Hickey said sorrowfully.

"Oh, yes, I know you have, Doctor. But I can't bear to lose my baby. She means everything to me. Oh Doctor, you are not a mother, and you cannot understand a mother's love."

Just as she spoke Luke walked into the room. In his sunken eyes and dissipated face lay the evidence of a hilarious and sleepless night. But he was awakened to the serious condition of the child, and inquired, "Say, Doc, is thur kid purty sick?"

"Yes, very low, Luke."

"An kain't yer git 'er well?"

"I am afraid there is no chance, Luke."

"But 'er hain't dy'n now, iz she, Doc?"

Hickey bent over the form of the babe, felt of her pulse, placed his ear to her heart, then turned to Luke. "All we can do is to hope and pray, Luke. But I am afraid she will soon be dead."

"I hain't ebber prayed, Doc."

"Try, Luke. It might help," Hickey suggested.

For a moment Luke only stared at the child, who seemed to be dying. He looked down at her tiny shoes beneath the bed, the white sunbonnet she had worn, and her crumpled little pink dress that she loved so well, hanging on a chair beside the bed. Then he sank to his knees, and with trembling lips, his awkward hands raised, for the first time in his life began to pray.

"Oh Gawd, ef ye air a Gawd, an' kin he'p our kid, I want'er ax ye to do hit, fo' she's goin'-a die—caus' I reckon ye know'd, Gawd, I hain't nebber hated ye—I jis' somehow hain't luv'd ye. I luv' Wathena, an' sumptin' tells me I hain't livin' jis' rite. Oh Gawd, I hain't nebber killed

nary man, an' I'm goin'-a quit drinkin' an' luv ye. I jis' fergits ye, I guess. But Gawd, ef ye air a Gawd, will ye lit our kid liv', I ax ye again? Amen."

He was awkward, his blunt words few, but his ignorant heart had been subdued. When he arose, he whispered solemnly to Hickey, "I'll nebber drink again, Doc."

"That will make Florence happy," Hickey returned. Tears filled Luke's eyes, and he was a pathetic figure in his remorse.

The sun was beginning to peep over a garden of roses and through the east side window, showering the sick-room with its bright rays, which, with the fragrance of the flowers, seemed to bespeak renewed hope, for Hickey had noted the child's temperature and pulse were approaching a more normal state.

"Thank God! The crisis has passed!" he said fervently to Florence. A burden was lifted from his heart, and Florence's face beamed with joy. She, too, had prayed, and God had answered their prayers.

Wathena made rapid improvement, and a month later she was herself again. Then came election day, and Florence took the baby over to her mother's. The suspense was terrible; Florence was restless, nervous. Would Luke be elected?

While Hodges' friends were happy over his victory, there were old-timers among the voters who predicted a night of terror. "Luke hain't ne'er bin licked, an' 'e'll shoot hup thur town," they said.

Florence and her mother were sitting on the vine-covered porch, Wathena fondling little white kittens, when a neighbor in passing announced Luke's defeat in the election. Florence immediately started for home. Poor Luke! How would he take it? He had seemed so down-

hearted lately, so humble and strange. Then her heart beat faster, and her breath came in short gasps as she pictured Luke drunk again. What would he do? Would he be so mean, abusive? Would he take his spite out on Wathena and herself? She started back to her mother's, to leave the child. But no, she couldn't do that. She hastily retraced her steps, and was almost breathless as she reached the latch of the picket gate and prudently entered the porch.

The window blinds were down. Not a sound could be heard.

She opened the door noiselessly, peering cautiously within. Luke was nowhere to be seen. She hurried into the bedroom, expecting to find him stupefied on the bed, but he was not there. She called, "Luke, Luke!" Only the echo of her trembling voice answered. Then she thought of the wood-shed. Once she had found him there in a repentant mood after an unusually prolonged spree. She stumbled down the back steps and came upon Luke seated on a blackjack stump, a forlorn figure, with his bowed head sunk low in his hands. He did not look up, but a low moan came from his lips. Florence's heart smote her, and she threw sympathetic arms around his neck, and kissed him with quivering lips. "Oh, poor daddy! Don't take it so hard—don't worry. It's all right, hon—we'll get along all right. You will find something to do—you still have little Wathena and me."

The defeat had touched his country pride, yet there was no revenge in his heart. Lifting his head and meeting Florence's tender gaze, he said, "I guess they air rite, kid. I hain't bin enny good t' nobuddy fur a long time."

"But you mustn't worry," Florence said consolingly, as she held her arms around his neck in sympathetic embrace.

"I hain't—I gat it ull figger'd out, an' hain't a-blamin' ennybody. An' we-uns air goin' 'way, kid, an' start ull over."

"Do you mean it?"

"Yep. I hain't bin happy har. I ne'er tol' ye why, an' I hain't ne'er goin' t' tell ye. I'm jis' a-goin' t' live fur ye an' our little baby Wathena."

"It was our prayers that saved her life. Yet some people don't believe in prayer," Florence added.

"Yep, an' I kinder believe in Gawd now, kid."

"It will bring us happiness, and I am so glad you feel as you do. We both have good health, each other, our little baby; and we ought to be happy."

At the mention of the baby, they went arm in arm into the house. Luke lowered his head, lifted Wathena from the floor, looked at Florence wiping away the tears, and said, "Hain't she thur cutest kid 'at e'er lived? An' I do luv 'er jis' 'smuch's ye do."

"Oh, I know you do, Luke."

"Listen kid," he said. "We-uns hain't ne'er goin' t' git onnywhar in this dad blamed ole place. Jake wrote Tom Dawson 'at him an' Claud air gittin' plum' ritch, an' ee wants me t'kum out thar. Sed ee'd gimme a good job. An' I kain't fergit sum ov thur fellers har."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Don' ax me, kid," he replied. "Let's don' tawk 'bout hit. I on'y ax 'at ye fergive muh. Sum day I'll make a lot o' munny, an ye won't havt' work. I'm goin' away,—jis' 'cause I luv ye an' Wathena." He clasped the child to his heart, caught hold of Florence, drew her to him; she sat on his knee, and he put his arm around her and kissed her again and again.

While Florence had been unhappy in Lazy Point, yet the moment Hatfield's name was mentioned, a feeling of

dread—that intuition a woman often has—surged through her. The very idea of Luke associating with Hatfield again made her apprehensive. She could see only trouble ahead, for in Hatfield there lay some tremendous power that dominated men, and in his hands Luke would be a tool. Her memory went back to the day and the reason she had married Luke. The letters! The times Luke knocked her down! How wild he was when angry! How kind he had been when sober. Then she reflected on the change in Luke since the baby's illness. She began to wonder. What would the future be out West? What if Luke began to drink again? Many of these things were ghastly to remember, horrid even to think about. But they were realities and had to be faced. And so, engrossed in thinking of the perplexing situation, she looked up, then dropped her head as though she did not approve of such a move.

"Doncha wanna go, kid?" Luke asked.

Florence hesitated a moment. But willing to make sacrifices, she said, "Hon, I want you to do what you think best."

A rap on the door arrested their attention. "Hello!" called Hickey, who seldom passed the door without stopping in.

"Hello! Come in, Doc," echoed Luke.

As the door opened and Hickey stepped into the room, Wathena leaped into his arms. "Oh my!" he exclaimed, "you are getting prettier every day! And your hair is turning the color of Roman-gold—just like your mother's." Florence smiled, and Luke's chest expanded in pride, for they all loved this physician.

"Ye're jis' thur feller we-uns'r itchin' t' see," Luke declared.

"What's up?"

"We-uns goin' t' move."

"What!" exclaimed Hickey, much surprised.

"Yep, goin' t' thur Injun kuntry."

Hickey's expression saddened, and he did not speak for a moment, for he was thinking, just as Florence had. Was it the thing for them to do?

"What d'yer think?" queried Luke.

"I am afraid it's a mistake, Luke."

"Whut fer?"

"Well, Luke," Hickey said deliberately and seriously, "where Jake is living, the country is wild and sparsely settled. It's the 'hell-hole' of the Territories—no schools, no laws; known as the bad land of the Nations."

Florence shuddered.

Luke was dubious, but determined.

"Then there is another thing," Hickey declared. "You have only recently awakened to your own faults. If you go to the Kozart Nation, Luke, and join Jake, you will be with a drinking and gambling crowd that has no respect for morals or law. You will soon fall back in line with their habits, and your resolutions will be forgotten."

"Nope, I've swore off, Doc."

"Well, Luke, that's easier said than done."

"Wal, wen I quits, I quits, Doc."

"That may be true, Luke. I hope so. But I am not in harmony with your moving into a primitive region where Wathena will be brought up in ignorance, for that is what has held Eastern Kentucky back for fifty years. And the men who read, who believe in the Bible and the law, are responsible for Lazy Point being changed from a morsel in the very jaws of barbarism to a thriving city of contented people."

"But I hain't gotta chance har, Doc."

"More than you will have out there."

"But 'at's er nu kuntry, doc."

Hickey bit his lips. He hesitated a moment; he was thinking of the New Echota Treaty enacted in 1885, the treaty that promised the Kozarts a home and perpetual protection if they would give up their homes in the eastern and southern states and move to other regions. He recalled how, at the mercy of commercial progress, the aborigines of America were being ignored and pushed back into obscurity at a rapid rate. "Luke," he said, "do you want the truth?"

"Sho' tootin', doc."

"Well, Luke, let me tell you, if Jake is making money in the Kozart Nation, he is very likely to be making it dishonestly, for that country belongs to the Indians."

"But hain't thur lots ov white fokes out thar?"

"Yes, but not by rights are they there."

"Whut's thur matter?"

Hickey evaded the answer. No explanation he could make would in any way change Luke's determination to go West, so he merely said, "You have made up your mind to go?"

"Yep, I wanter git outta har."

Turning and regarding Florence sympathetically, Hickey asked her, "Do you think it a good move?"

Florence had sat through it all, listening to Hickey's advice, thinking earnestly, seriously, weighing the problem. To blot out all sad memory of the past was uppermost in her mind. "Suppose Luke does make money—will he remain sober?" she asked herself. But, on second thought, Tom Dawson had once told her the Kozart country was a prohibition nation, where no whiskey could be bought, and that Hatfield had been so successful he had quit drinking, and his Kentucky ways were a thing of the

past. Then, too, from what she had read, there was opportunity out there.

"Well," she said to Hickey, "if Luke thinks it best, I am ready to go, doctor."

Realizing that they had both fully made up their minds to go, Hickey shook his head, and said, "I certainly hate to see you leave."

"I hate ter leav' ye, doc."

"I hope you will remember one thing, Luke," said Hickey.

"Whut's 'at?"

"The lack of education, the desire for power and lust for money are responsible for most of the troubles on this earth. Give Wathena an education, be good to Florence—you could never find a truer and better wife and mother than she. Love and protect her." Then he turned to Florence and said, "I leave for Elkhorn tomorrow,—will be there several days. I don't suppose we shall ever meet again."

"We will always love you, Doctor, and think of you as the only real friend we ever had in Kentucky," gulped Florence with no premonition that some day their paths would cross tragically again.

As Hickey bent down to kiss Wathena, she threw her chubby arms around his neck, and tears rolled down her cheeks. "I love you, Uncle Doc," she cried in a shrill little voice. "I love you heaps, an' I don' wanna go 'way an' leave you. I wanna stay."

Hickey's throat was choked with emotion.

"Why can't I stay with Uncle Doc, mamma?" the little girl pleaded, her soft hands caressing his face and hair.

Hickey kissed her and held her close. Then he gently disengaged her arms and put her down, while tears freely

flowed from his own eyes. "Goodbye, little sweetheart. May God bless and keep you—all of you," he said; then retreated, waving a last farewell from the gate.

Four days later, Luke, Florence, and the beautiful little golden-haired daughter, now seven years old, left for the Kozart Indian Nation.

CHAPTER VII

ROLL back the curtains of time and stand beside the cradle of the human race. Search the pages of history; and then reason with yourself why the Indians created warfare.

There has been so much misleading information circulated concerning the red men that few fully realize, appreciate or understand the great tragedy that has befallen these primitive people, unless they have seen the various living conditions of Indians in such places as the Kozart Nation in the territorial days, again after statehood days, then again after oil was discovered, when towns sprang up everywhere and what we call "men" became millionaires over night through deception and fraudulent transactions with a helpless race.

It was President Jefferson who said, "In truth, the ultimate point of rest and happiness for the Indian is to let our settlements and theirs meet and blend together, in grouping themselves with us as citizens. It is better to promote than to retard, better to be identified with us and preserve them and the occupations of their kind than to expose and be a separate people."

By a treaty with the Indians in 1820, happy hunting grounds were given them; and in 1825 President Monroe laid plans to remove all red men east of the Mississippi to this newly founded reservation, larger than many a foreign province. It was to be a permanent home for the tribes, and they were to be left alone and allowed to lead their own lives. In eastern states, in their primitive way,

they were just becoming settled and happy, when men of affairs thought this a solution to the Indian problem. Thus the prophetic vision of Hiawatha:

“Saw the remnants of our people,
Sweeping westward, wild and woful,
Like the cloud-rock of a tempest,
Like the withered leaves of autumn.”

It made no difference what they were doing, where they lived, or how peaceful they had been, this was the law. They must tear down bark-hut homes, wigwams or tents, and as best they could move on to distant regions.

It was before the Indian Territories were made into one state that the two covered wagons of Hood and Hatfield crossed streams, valleys and hills, and reached the ranch home of Claud Hood in the Kozart Nation. This country, now alive with oil, cattle, cotton and corn, was then a mecca for cattle-thieves, bank-robbers, and some of the most desperate men in the United States.

It was on March first, 1889, that a court repealed certain laws, making it impossible for the five civilized tribes—the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, Seminoles, and Cherokees—to enter into leases or contracts with even their own race; they could no longer make leases for mining, oil or the sale of timber, or the right-of-way to railroads, without the authority of Congress; and that body agreed to protect the Indian against trespassing or settlement of the land by any tribe or nation of other Indians, unless the tribes or nation had given consent by agreement or treaty.

And thereafter new treaties were made, one to protect the other—treaties with loopholes, which the Jake Hatfield and Silas Hood type of men crawled through.

And so, in the most remote section of the Kozart Na-

tion, was born the "one-tent-town" of Kozart; and there Hatfield began to operate as he once did in the Cumberland Mountain country of Kentucky. It must be remembered that the Kozart Nation, almost an empire in itself, was far away from schools, culture or refinement.

With Hatfield's natural shrewdness and Hood's ability to distill whiskey, these pagan characters were soon established, for they feigned sympathy with the Indians, learned their ways, became familiar with their signs, and passed thousands of gallons of whiskey into the nation.

This nation, often called the Kozart range or territory, comprised a vast acreage of timberland in its northern part, open prairies on the western borders, and the Kozart range of hills and threadlike valleys toward the east. The southern portion was river-bottom land, and beyond lay great sand dunes and the Shatoga Desert, while the central part of the nation was traversed by small creeks, the Kozart River, and the great and fertile Opatonga Valley, in which the town of Kozart was built.

To dominate the destinies of the Kozart Nation was Hatfield's first ambition; and, as for that part, this country was so isolated from the outside world that for some years before statehood, government men had little knowledge of the fertile valley where he had laid his plans for power.

One of Hatfield's steps toward domination of the Kozart country was to become fully familiar with the Indian treaties, laws, and the activities of the agents, and be appointed one, and by that uncanny ability forever so dominant he made the Kozart people, both white and red, believe he himself was the whole government power over them; and by ingratiating himself into the confidence of an unscrupulous agent in an adjoining nation, it was easy

to control the people and become a master-mind over them.

Like the real government agents, he had a fixed rule that any trader or collector holding accounts against the Indians must have their bills made out in triplicate form and endorsed by his own Probate Court before attempting to collect them.

At the headquarters of his cohorts, there was a pay-porch roped off, and no white man allowed inside. However, the moment a Kozart received his money and stepped beyond that dead-line, there stood lawyers and bootleggers, grasping for the Indian's money before it warmed in his hand.

Once in power, Hatfield began to play upon their superstitions. Rituals of hate were daily practised, and whenever the people refused to meet his command they were ruined by a stealthy carrying away of their stock, the burning of their homes, or even a crime still worse.

One day, on the humble farm of Chuckwood, who was known as the Kozart hermit, the owner found the waters of his spring covered with a scum of oil. He went to Hatfield, whom he thought the government had sent to protect the people, and told the discovery. Secret meetings followed, political grafters went to Washington, officials were hoodwinked, and more grief was the lot of the uneducated Kozart people.

In the meantime, in later years came the arrangement with resident tribes, and in 1907 the Indian territories were merged into a single state. And to the Kozarts Hatfield awarded certain tracts of land, even though it seemed worthless and the soil barren. The red men tried to be happy under his new treaty, which they believed at last would be a real protection.

New oil strikes were now being made in the former Nations. People were flocking to the new state from all over the continent; towns were springing up over night. The country was full of promoters, oil prospectors, gambling-dens and wide-open illicit bars. It was during these exciting times that the isolated section of the Kozart country became known to the outside world, and the brutal savagery of the Hatfield organization was keenly felt.

"Hungry was the air around them,
Hungry was the sky above them;
And the hungry stars in heaven,
Like the eyes of wolves, glared at them."

How true these lines of Longfellow! For here in the old Kozart Nation, people were found in ravines, on the hillsides, or back of their own homes, riddled with bullets.

Fast learning the white man's ways, many of the Kozarts were becoming successful farmers, when the cruel hand of fate again took hold, for, during the first year of statehood, a record-breaking drought hit the new state. Not a drop of rain fell for six months. Following this came the money panic, which sent merchants to the wall. Banks shut down. People were destitute of both food and clothing. Streams went dry, wells became low, the roads were clouds of unbreathable dust, the summer heat was intense.

Where the Kozarts had cultivated a little ground to grow corn, potatoes and wheat for their own use, raised hogs, pastured their cattle and found it just enough to enable them to live in their simple way, the rays of the scorching sun burned their crops to the ground. Their hogs and cattle died for want of food and water, and Hatfield refused to aid their chief or any of their tribe. This left but one alternative—and that was, to rob, steal,

or starve. Then was the true character of the Kozart people revealed.

Instead of resenting the cruelty of the Hatfield group and going to war, they gathered their squaws in groups of four, six and eight, and, taking turns with each other in caring for the little papooses and conveying them to places of safety, the red men abandoned their wigwams, huts and tents in the Kozart Nation, and went up into the Ozark hills. There they found cool mountain streams, green trees, fresh berries, and from branches and roots obtained food to satisfy their appetites.

Two months later, when Hatfield had come to the conclusion that he had starved the Indians out and was filing stakes on all of the unoccupied lands, making false deeds to their property, rain fell in torrents for three days, and the Kozarts returned to claim their holdings.

This was the year that Tom Dawson and Doc Hickey back in Kentucky received letters from Hood and Hatfield telling of the oil boom, the great opportunities, and the money they had made in the new country. If Luke Berry could have seen the forlorn, somber-faced men leaving their crude huts in search of water because of Hatfield's cruelty in refusing to aid them, he would have heeded Hickey's advice and not left the Blue Grass State in quest of fame and fortune.

CHAPTER VIII

AT the little red railway station, a rube band began to play. A hundred hats went into the air, and bottles of liquor were tipped to thirsty lips, as screeching brakes and noisy steam ceased, and Luke Berry and his family emerged from a west-bound train in the Kozart country.

Luke stepped from the car wearing a large black Kentucky hat, brown corduroy trousers, a new long-tailed coat, high-heeled boots and a red shirt. Long tassels swung from his red gauntlets, and in his hand he carried an old strapped satchel so fully packed that the contents bulged from its ends. He was closely followed by Florence, in a faded brown skirt which fitted tightly around her waist, a jacket which was several sizes too large, an orange-colored cotton blouse, and a cherry-colored hat. She led little Wathena, whose golden hair curled about her sunny face, and who was too young even to wonder what the future held for her.

"He's the man we need," cried Hood, as Berry descended the steps and turned to aid his wife and child.

"Yes, a crack shot," answered Hatfield, as he and Hood made their way through a motley crowd who daily met the train.

"Nervy as hell, strong as an ox, an' likes to fight. That's what we need, couldn't get a better man," declared Hood.

Immediately Luke caught sight of Hood, and cried out, "'Lo, Silas!"

"Hello Luke! Hello Florence!" shouted Hood.

"H'lo Jake! An' how air ye?" inquired Luke.

"Feel like a millionaire," was Jake's jovial response as they sauntered out of the crowd.

"And he'll soon be one, by gum, if he keeps a goin'," put in Claud Hood.

Hatfield's glistening black eyes were still prominent and piercing; but his hair was more neatly groomed, his manner of speech that of the Middle-West, and he was in better attire than when he left Kentucky. Little change was apparent in Silas Hood, save a protruding abdomen, and the Indian red on his face.

Hatfield turned to Wathena. Her dimpled cheeks, sunny smile and the golden curls which hung from beneath a little black tam conjured a picture in his mind of a pretty, fascinating woman a few years hence. "You're as pretty as a picture, and a great big girl now!" he exclaimed. Wathena shrank back shyly and blushed, her mother squeezing her hand.

Suddenly a shot rang out.

"One buck each, boys, and it'll cost you two birds for each yer miss!" yelled one of the noisy group as he tossed an empty flask into the air. There was a fusillade from long-handled revolvers. It was an exhibition for Buffalo Bill, who was on the train. Swayed by these first scenes in the West, and seized with the spirit of the vociferous mob, Luke pulled his gun and cracked twelve bottles without a miss.

This made a hit with the westerners.

But the real surprise came when they all piled into Jake's big touring car, the first automobile Luke and Florence had ever seen, and one of the few in the Nation. It had high-backed seats, a straight, wide, high windshield, large square headlights, an angle-shaped hood. A wide

leather strap which ran from the lamps to the top of the windshield supported the top of the car.

"Gee, but this air shor' sum flyin' mursheen, Jake! Ye hain't bin losin' enny time makin' munny out har. S'pose I kin ebber git one like hit?"

"Yes sir, Luke, if you do as I tell you."

"Gosh! Hain't it a tooter, Florence," Luke ejaculated.

"He's going so fast I can't think or talk," Florence replied.

One can imagine how she felt. The car was making only twenty miles an hour, humping and jumping over rocks and chuckholes in the country road; yet to Florence it seemed like an ocean liner gliding over a placid sea.

As the car whizzed by scattered farm houses, children rushed from yards, and women in long dresses with shawls over their heads peeped out of windows or stared from the doorways of small huts at the sound of the rubber horn.

"Air them Injuns?" asked Luke.

"Yes, and wild as buffaloes," replied Jake, as he made a wry face, and winked at Hood.

"Hain't ye skeer't uv 'em?" inquired Luke in a rather leery tone of voice.

"Tryin' to insult me, Luke?" retorted Jake.

"I wuz kinder jokin' ye, Jake."

Luke did not know that, in their peculiar native way, almost every tribe of Indians was happy, peaceful, and never molested anyone unless forced by outside influences to protect themselves.

"Are they really wild and dangerous, Mr. Hatfield?" asked Florence meekly, Wathena clinging to her mother's arm and nervously glancing at the redskins in their bright shawls, wide beaded neck bands, and colored moccasins.

"No, they are not wild, and at the snap of my fingers I can have every skunk in this country in my office before sundown."

"Up t' ye ole tricks? Gat 'em skeered, Jake?" Luke drawled out, in his lazy voice.

"Well, Luke, other agents, bankers and guardians, are skinning them like shearing sheep, and I might as well get mine while the getting's good."

For about two hours the car rumbled through timberland, plowed sand, and open prairie country which was filled with grazing cattle that were mere skin and bones. The three days' rain heretofore mentioned, which had soaked the soil and flooded streams, and which had caused the Indians to return to the Kozart country, had come too late to enliven the dead grass, and here and there could be seen the carcass of a cow or a horse that had perished. The scene left a lasting impression upon Luke and Florence as they raced through the dusty streets of Kozart and drew up in front of the Hatfield mansion. It was a two-story structure, painted white, and furnished as only a man of means could afford. A place where peccancy reigned, and Hatfield scoffed the law.

"My! What a fine house!" exclaimed Florence, her eyes dazzled by this magnificence.

"An' Luke can have one too, in a few years, if he follows my advice," Jake asserted.

"Oh, it would be so wonderful!" Florence gleefully commented.

"I tell you, Luke," broke in Hood, "we poor devils stayed in that razor-backed country too long. Wonder we didn't rot! It's new here—big change, everybody's makin' money. We're goin' to make you sheriff. We don't need any, but gotta have somebody to pick off strangers sometimes, you know."

Luke looked at Florence, who coldly stared at Hatfield. But his quick wit, always ready, put her somewhat at ease when he remarked, "He's kidding you, Luke. We don't have to do like we did in Kentucky."

Florence had shivered at Hood's remark. She had come with Luke thinking only of happiness and his making money, and before they had hardly had time to breathe Hood was talking just as he had always talked in Kentucky.

"Silas means the cattle-rustlers must be picked up and taken to Shatoga and jailed," added Jake.

"Russ-lers! Whut's 'at?" queried Luke.

"Don't ye know?"

"Naw, hain't ebber hurd uv 'em."

"They're men who drive a fellow's cattle away and put their own brand on 'em and call 'em their own."

"Aw yes," drawled Luke. "An' ye call 'em Shatoga?" was his further query.

"No, Shatoga is a town between here and Opatonga City. Some of our friends live there and help us swing deals with the yaps," Jake explained.

"Not so bad here, Luke," piped Claud Hood, who had glanced at Jake, and caught his meaning.

"You're sheriff right now," announced Jake.

"Sho'? Ye don' mean hit!" exclaimed Luke excitedly, his eyes sparkling as he grasped Jake's hand.

"Bet yer boots!" averred Hatfield.

"Ull hunky! Fin' a place fur Florence an' thur kid, an' I'll stick t'ye fur life!"

"This place is all ready for you, Luke," Hatfield assured him. "It's a little cottage, all furnished—even a fire-place—and rent only ten dollars."

"By gosh! Ye sho' work fast, Jake! Dawson only writ ye las' week that we-uns wuz kummin'."

"But it's all fixed, Luke, and that settles it."

As they gathered around Hatfield's dining table and sat down to dinner, Florence asked where Edna was.

"Oh Edna? She's in New York City, living with her aunt and going to school," Hatfield informed her.

"Attending school!" Florence exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes. You see, we all thought nothing about schools back there in Kentucky, Florence, 'cause we knowed everybody so dang well that we didn't need eddication. But out here there are so many dam Yankee sharpers that unless a fellow can read and write and do a little figgerin' he can't get very far. And besides, Florence, you may remember when my sister came to Kentucky one time to spend Christmas with me?—But, you know, she wouldn't stay all night."

"No, I don't remember that," said Florence.

"Sho' tootin', I does," Luke declared. "An' that hain't all—she wuz blame funny. I hain't fergut 'ow she wored 'er hair an' pow'ded 'er face."

"Well, you see, Luke, Sis is a club-woman now, and when I went to New York last year, soon as she laid her eyes on Edna she went plumb crazy about the kid. Sis said Edna was too pretty not to have an eddication, and that if I would leave her in New Yo'k a few years when she come home she'd be the social queen of the Kozart country."

"Well, I am agreeably surprised," commented Florence.

"Yep," Hatfield added. "I can afford to send her to school, and mebbe she'll teach us all the big-dog ways when she gets home."

Florence noted the change in Hatfield's attire, and particularly in his speech, although he still said "know'd," "eddication," and "mebbe." Yet the change from his

mountain dialect to the Middlewest manner of speaking was at least to his credit. He was improving fast, that was evident, she told herself.

"The move to Kozart certainly has helped you, Jake."

"Oh yes, out here the people won't look at a fellow unless he dresses up, 'specially when he's made a lot o' money—they kinda expect him to look a little better'n ordinary folks."

After their dinner was finished, Luke and Florence sat bewildered listening to the flagrant stories of Hatfield and Hood, none of which were doubted, for it was apparent that both had become very prosperous since they left Kentucky.

Then, when Luke and Florence were shown to their cottage that night, it was so modern and so well furnished and superior to any home they had ever lived in, that they were elated and excited over the turn of events—so much so that they could not sleep. After putting Wathena to bed, they sat up talking, past the midnight hour.

The cottage was equipped with electric lights, and had a bathroom. There was an organ in the front room and an Edison cylinder talking machine; pictures hung on the walls, and lace curtains clung to the window frames. A bright new rug was on the floor.

"Oh my!" exclaimed Florence. "I never expected this of Jake!"

"Ye see, I tole ye, hon, Jake wuz wantin' us t' kum."

"But he has been so thoughtful."

"Yes, an' we goin' be 'appy 'ere, kid."

Stepping over to the organ and touching the keys, Luke said, "Jake sed wun 'ee gitted ritch 'ee wuz goin' fetch's owt 'ere, an' thur organ 'e gat fur ye, 'cause 'ee knowed ye kud play hit."

Like cooing birds, Florence and Luke stood arm in

arm, looking at the organ,—its fancy top, carved spindles, mirror, and little place where a vase of flowers might stand. I am going to teach Wathena to play the organ," Florence said.

"An' sen' ur t' skule, too," added Luke.

"Yes, I want her to have an education and to know all about good books, and to read the Bible and live as my mother taught me to live."

"So she'll be like Edna," Luke said.

Florence bit her lips. "No," she said, "not like Edna, hon; but like her mother teaches her." For Florence was thinking of Edna's parentage, and the many wicked things her father had done heretofore. And, despite his thoughtfulness as she now saw it, she could not conceive of being happy with a child like Edna. When they finally went to bed, they lay huddled in each other's arms whispering about the future, and were happier than they had ever been before.

That same night, while Luke and Florence's hearts throbbed ecstatically as they talked of the future, Jake Hatfield and Silas and Claud Hood, in the luxurious living-room of Jake's home, were discussing a letter received from Dawson, which told of Luke's defeat in the election, and that he had sworn to quit drink. For these reasons Hatfield decided to use diplomacy, and gradually work Luke back into a frame of mind that would impel him to heed and carry out their demands. Their scheme was to pay him well, buy him a car, and keep Florence in blissful ignorance of any criminal act. They knew that eventually Luke would not only comply with their commands, but he would also make them a valuable confederate.

Thus Hatfield pursued his course, for many months making life pleasant for Luke and Florence, and almost

a year elapsed before Luke was asked to commit a criminal act.

Hatfield's campaign of crime was so cleverly directed that his purpose was almost impossible to detect. Although a mountaineer, he had a master-mind, quick to learn, discerning, and possessed of a remarkable memory, he wielded a wicked power over other men.

CHAPTER IX

IT was rumored, and no one doubted what they heard, that while the government had removed squatters from the Cherokee strip prior to its opening in 1893, as well as other sections that were thrown open to white settlers in the years to come, and had stationed soldiers on their borders to prevent trickery, yet men of the Hatfield type had colleagues hidden in remote sections of the strip, ready to stake upon fertile spots the moment the starting gun was fired and the mad mob of home-seekers dashed across the line.

By way of further explanation concerning the injustice to the Kozart and other tribes before and after statehood, it should be noted that in certain sections each Indian was allotted a certain parcel of land, as well as a portion for each child he had. Before selling his land it was necessary for him to inform the Indian agent, who sent his application to Washington for permission to sell. The Indian agent then advertised for sealed bids, and the highest bidder won. Hatfield by various modes of deception induced the Kozart to sell his land, and through his cohorts acquired land outside the Kozart Nation. He was tipped off to the sealed bids of other buyers, and not only did he get the land, but seldom did he pay for it.

Claud Hood and Hatfield usually tricked the Kozart out of his money, either by robbing him outright or claiming him a half-breed, for in the latter case he was not entitled to any allotment at all. Besides, when to their

advantage, for reasons best known to the Hatfield group the Indian might suddenly disappear.

All this formed only a minor part of Hatfield's trickery. As much of the open Kozart Nation became fenced and plowed, and the riders of the surrounding ranges were out of jobs, there arose a group of outlaws, the like of which no one in the Middle-West had ever known. Bill Doolan, once a member of the Dalton gang; "Bitter Creek" and "Arkansas Tom," known as the gentlemen bandits, who had killed many men; "Red Buck," a vicious slayer; "Wild Man" Charlie Pierce; "Little Dick," who, it was said, had never slept inside of a room but always rolled up in blankets and spent the nights on the ground; "Tulsa Jack" and "Dynamite Dick," and one of the boldest, Henry Starr, all were members of the outlaw group.

These outlaws in previous years had worked on or near the Horse Shoe, or the H X Bar Ranch, and robbed trains, stores, and carried on a relentless campaign, knowing they had protection and could seek refuge with Hatfield in the Kozart range.

Besides these fearless and dangerous men there were a few daring women in the Indian country who could shoot fast and straight, and were unbelievably bold. Of these, "Cattle Annie," "Hickory Sal," and the "Rose of the Cimarron" were best known. "Hickory Sal" was Jake Hatfield's intimate for a considerable period, and often enticed the wealthy Indians into his home, robbed them, blackmailed them, or committed any other crime that aided Hatfield in gaining money or power.

However, Jake Hatfield was a paradox. After several years in Kozart, his power became so great that he was sought by many ambitious business men, who desired to further their interests through his association with men of affairs. Also he had visualized the coming of state-

hood, the need for political bosses and the opportunity for greater graft if he were one of them; and he had secretly begun to read extensively and to study books which would aid him to ascend the throne of financial and political supremacy in the state.

Kozart was growing fast, and as time went on crime increased. A few violators were being caught and prosecuted, but seldom convicted. The crafty Hatfield group, and the evil influence they held over the people, made it impossible for any individual or small group of men to penetrate the sanctum of the Hatfield organization. The honest government men were doing their best to educate the red men, and promote sanitary conditions in their homes, but found it a hazardous problem, for land-hungry whites took every advantage of any loophole in the law.

In an effort to curb the crime wave and stop the peddling of whiskey, a nationally known prohibitionist was engaged by the government. Aided by daring deputies, for several months he destroyed stills, burned paraphernalia and wiped out vice in many sections of the country. But this was only temporary, for whiskey was daily being shipped into every section of the state.

There was nothing Hatfield would not do to further his own selfish aims. About this time he saw the advantage and opportunity of increasing his power by organizing and opening the Hatfield Bank, of which he became president. And, although he knew nothing of law, nor did he intend to obey it, to further his own power some months later he announced his candidacy for county attorney, and was elected by an overwhelming majority. It must be remembered, however, that real law and order were almost unknown in the Kozart range, and as a whole the people were even less educated than himself.

His rapid rise to power soon began to prey upon the

minds of revengeful men who also had a following among the people in a part of the Kozart range and the adjoining western country. It can easily be understood how quickly rivalry could have sprung up between the two ambitious and unscrupulous factions, with misunderstanding and hate. But the shrewd Hatfield was quick to see the importance of unity, and promptly began negotiations for a pact to bind them into one.

Of these men, Al Dawson, red-headed, bold and vigorous, was the leader. His partners were Mart Massey, of small physique, selfish and suave, a banker in a nearby town; Nick Patterson, tall, cunning, politically inclined; Tom Blackburn, once a bartender and known as a two-gun man; and his brother, Bob Blackburn, a country lawyer, who was once an Indian agent. Under a promise of protection and great wealth, Hatfield consummated a deal that brought all of these men into his hands as his aides in crime.

But while he now had a powerful organization under him, Jake was still not above committing personal misdeeds. One afternoon within a month after election, as Hatfield and Hood emerged from the bank and started home, they passed a man who, by his walk and wavering eyes, caught Hatfield's attention. The stranger wore a gray suit, black shoes and hat, and under his arm he carried a bulky package wrapped in a piece of cloth.

"Who is that fellow?" asked Hatfield.

"I don't know his name," replied Hood.

"Ever see him before?"

"Yes, he's a waiter at the Kozart Cafe."

Despite Hood's apparent unconcern, Hatfield regarded the unimportant-looking stranger with grave suspicion, remarking, "There is something about that fel-

low that I remember. I'll go over and wait at the drug store."

"Want me to follow him?" Hood asked.

"Yes," Hatfield replied, and kept on walking north, as Silas Hood turned and followed the stranger for two blocks south, one block west, and two blocks north. Then he saw him walk east a half block and enter the Scott boarding-house directly back of the Hatfield bank. Hood then went to the City Drug Store to meet Jake.

"Where did he go?" inquired Hatfield.

"Old lady Scott's," Hood replied.

"Call your brother Claud; tell him to look this bird over tonight and report to me as soon as he has a line on him."

Hardly had Hatfield spoken than into the drug store stepped the man Hood had just trailed. The moment he had seen Hatfield, like a shot there came to him a memory. His mother as she lay dying had told him a part of the story, and prayed that her son might some day avenge the wrong done her. How well he remembered her exclamation as she pointed out Hatfield: "That's him! He shot me! He's your father, and he swore he would get you! Go, honey, and don't come back!"

Thinking Hatfield had not recognized him, the man whirled around, saying to himself, "Hatfield doesn't know me—I need work. What chance would I have here? I must try to forget it." So he returned to his room.

But Hatfield also fully recalled the day Mary Dixon, once his trusted Creole maid, had returned to Lazy Point, entered his store, shut the door behind her, and threatened to shoot him, swearing that either she or her illegitimate boy would get him some day. He had grabbed the pistol from her hands, fired, and thrown the gun onto the floor

where she had fallen. Leaving through the rear door, he went home and let the report go out that Mary had committed suicide.

Without the slightest remorse for the many crimes he had directed in the past nor the way Mary Dixon—for six years loyal and faithful to his daughter Edna and her mother—had pleaded for her virtue, Hatfield could now think only of money, power, and the political bee buzzing in his bonnet. "There's no reason why I can't land in the governor's chair," he reflected. "The story of Dixon must never come out,—her son must go as others have gone." He kept repeating to himself, "There's but one thing to do," as Hood awaited his command.

"He's a safe-blower," Hood quickly conjectured.

"We'll bump him off tomorrow," said Hatfield with decision. Then he left the drug store and went to his home, and the next morning called Luke Berry over the telephone, saying, "Meet me tonight at six o'clock. I'll be in the bank. Come through the back way. It's important, Luke."

"Sho' tootin'," replied Luke. "What's up?"

"I'll tell you tonight," Jake assured him.

The day melted into a sultry Kozart night; no breeze was blowing; the stars seemed to stand still in the heavens, a lazy moon peered through fleecy clouds, lightning continually flashed in the dark low-hung mists that flanked the eastern horizon.

A group of idle fellows stood on the sidewalk opposite the bank, watching with curious gaze the queer actions of a man who seemed to sense impending danger. He scratched his nose, then his head; he was nervous, he eyed people askance. He appeared interested in the width, the height of the windows and doors of the bank, and as people passed him he evaded their glance. Yet there was

something pathetic about him. He had a smooth olive skin, fine features, was slender and attractive—the flesh and blood of a Creole, and the son of a parricide.

“Acts kinda queer,” mumbled one of the idle Toms.

“Figurin’ on blowin’ the bank an’ skippin’ out,” suggested others of the gang.

As darkness crept on, Luke Berry, as agreed, entered the bank from the rear, walked to the front, passed the windows with their drawn shades, and saw Jake Hatfield peeping through a narrow space between the shade and window-sill.

“Wal, whut’s up, Jake?” asked Luke.

“A gang is planning to blow the bank. We got to bump that bird off,” Hatfield replied, pointing to a man crossing the street.

“But, Jake, ye hain’t killin’ jis’ ’cauze ye only think ’em a robbur, air ye?”

“I’m not thinking!” Hatfield snapped out in a scornful whisper. “Do as I say, or you can take your wife and dam’ kid and go back to Kentucky.”

Luke reflected a moment. “Wall, I’ll jis’ shoot t’ skeer ’em, Jake, an’ git ’em t’kum t’ thur bank, an’ ye kin ax ’em whut ’ee’s doin’ har.”

“If he makes a move for his gun, I’ll be back of you with mine,” Hatfield said in a low tone of voice, as a quick ruse formed in his mind to force upon Luke the stain of human life.

Up to now Luke Berry had been a peaceful man; only when drunk had he ever committed a single act of injustice to anyone. In fact, his fearless, bold, good-natured way had always prevailed over those he had had to arrest.

Without another word Luke turned, quickly crept back of the rear door of the bank, and touched the trigger of his revolver as the stranger walked by the bank inno-

cently en route to his boarding-place. Luke purposely shot above the man's head, but at the same moment Hatfield raised his gun and fired, and Ed Dixon doubled up and fell to the ground.

At the sound of the second shot, Hatfield leaped from the rear door and pitched a bag of silver and currency out where the body lay. Someone yelled, "The bank's being robbed!" And as a crowd gathered, Luke walked over to the body, holding his smoking gun, and exclaimed dubiously, "So ye tho't ye'd git 'way wid hit, ole feller!"

Hatfield rushed up to Berry, and in an apparently appreciative tone said, "You've saved my life, and the bank too!" Luke, amazed, turned and looked at his own gun, then apprehensively at Hatfield.

The group of shiftless, indolent men who had watched the stranger before the shooting, expressed their opinions, told of his queer actions, and one of them even claimed he saw the man trying to open the side window of the bank.

Little was known of the stranger. He had been in Kozart about two weeks, had made no friends. So he was identified as a bank robber caught in the act, and his career ended.

Luke really shot above the man's head, and was surprised when he fell, not detecting Hatfield shooting simultaneously. But as Hatfield and the crowd began to praise him for the deed, Luke took it for granted that since it was too dark to take sure aim, perhaps he had drawn his gun too low. And from now on he was to be a murderous tool in the hands of Hatfield.

CHAPTER X

RAPID changes and great developments occurred throughout the Indian country nations in the years that followed statehood. Gradually a more desirable class of people were inhabiting the Kozart range, and for a time at least crimes were apparently on the wane. Yet Hatfield was merely more discreet. The criminal undercurrent was in reality worse than ever. Not only was he now the guardian over a score of wealthy Indians that did not even belong to the Kozart tribe, but he had visions of ruling the state with an iron hand. While he had made no public announcement of his intention to run for governor, he was laying plans to this end.

In a secret meeting with Silas Hood, postmaster; his brother Claud, Chief-of-police; Luke Berry, sheriff; Al Dawson and Nick Patterson, political fixers, and Mart Massey to aid in the drawing of deeds and banking in other parts of the state, Hatfield formed an organization that brought about a state of injustice to Indians unparalleled in the history of America.

What added kindling to the flames was the fact that Claud Hood and Bob Blackburn had hoodwinked officials, and had a bill passed which removed all power from certain Indians. And, through his intimate knowledge of Indian affairs, Hatfield found many prominent men in other parts of the state eager to join in a scheme that would swindle the Kozarts out of their land, so long as their names were left out of the deeds and papers.

Soon thereafter forty tribes were shuffled into the

same territory where the Kozart tribes were sent and lands were also assigned to the native tribes of Kiowa, Comanche, Wichita and Cheyennes, whose claims had been entirely overlooked in the first negotiations. Other tribes were brought in from Texas, Nebraska, even the Modocs and some of the Nez Perces of Oregon.

Dawson, Patterson, and Claud Hood, the working tools of Hatfield, often met various Indians in their old frame shacks, tents or adobes, and there Hood in Indian signs and language explained that under a new treaty soon to be in effect Indians could no longer own property in the Kozart country, but that great wealth, land ownership, and freedom could be had in a distant territory. And so impotent were the Kozarts, and so blissfully trusting in the promises of wealth and liberty, that it was easy to make them believe freedom and primitive hunting grounds were awaiting all who joined Hatfield's proposed group.

For weeks this deception continued. Soon the Kozarts had been led into a trap that was to rob them of every earthly possession.

On the night the plans to take them away were to be carried out three empty cattle cars with wide-open doors were standing on a side switch on the outskirts of a town near Kozart. There was a table near the entrance to the cars, on the table a pen and bottle of ink. Luke Berry stood guard for Hatfield, while one by one the Indians, soaked with Hatfield whiskey and seemingly eager to get away, scribbled their names or made only a mark in signing a deed, and handed it to Hood or Hatfield, standing near by.

Among the last to enter the car was an apparently helpless and crazy half-breed, who made it appear that he was trying to escape by crawling under the car. His shoes were too large for his small feet. He was tall and

thin, wore a slouch hat, and around his neck a piece of crepe. The shirt he wore was old and faded, and a heavy and unkempt growth of hair enveloped his face. When caught by the arm and pulled back to the door of the car, he said:

"Mebbe so me no go!"

"And why not?" asked Blackburn.

"Heap Big Chief no kum!"

"Chief come tomorrow, next train," Dawson assured him.

"No. Chief never kum—only white man say he kum."

"But you will have land, a home, good hunting; and ten thousand of your Indian brothers are waiting to greet you."

"La-Pa-Ga—La-Pa-Ga—Slo-B-aa! Slo-B-aa!" the Indian returned.

"Whut'n 'ell air ye sayin'?" queried Berry.

"He means: Two ways, Injustice. He's talking Osage language," whispered Claud Hood.

"Oh! To hell with the skunk!" exclaimed Dawson.

"Get in the car, you hog!" said Dawson, as Blackburn and Berry grabbed hold of the stranger, and threw him bodily through the open doorway.

"Some freak!" ejaculated Hatfield, who opened a bottle, and poured acid on the wabbling figure, just to see him squirm with pain.

None of the men who joked the queer Indian knew who he was, nor that he was disguised and had a reason for his presence there; nor did they suspect that in later years he would expose them as no other man had ever done.

Lulled by alluring promises, and while under the influence of whiskey, after they had signed the deeds that

divested them of land they rightfully owned, the redskins were herded into the cattle-cars, in charge of Dawson, Patterson and Claud Hood, and the doors locked and sealed. The train pulled away, and for three days and nights the cars bumped over railroad ties and rails, the Indians being kept intoxicated until they had reached the boundaries of a foreign land.

Access to Old Mexico was simple, Hatfield's money again being the dominating factor. And the Kozarts were shipped across the borders like beasts, and turned loose in a desolate region, where only scavenger birds and rattlesnakes survived.

But when Chief Bearskin learned of the deception, he went to Mexico, gathered the starving warriors and their families together, and brought the squaws and children back. And, aided by a friend of the Chief, walking the entire eight hundred miles most of the warriors finally returned to the land they rightfully owned.

Then Chief Bearskin went to Washington in the interest of his people, and three months later a senatorial investigation committee came to Kozart. They arrived in special cars, with clerks, stenographers and sergeants-at-arms, and for a week the investigation went on. Conclusive evidence was shown that the Hood brothers' organization had perpetrated the outrage.

The brothers were indicted, but through Hatfield's influence, combined with their own official connections and citizenship, the cases were dropped when the tracts of land were all deeded back to the red men.

Strange as it may seem, the government investigations resulted only in temporary vigilance. Hatfield's power continued, and he was trusted by every Kozart. He made them believe that he alone was responsible for their return, and that he would hold their land in trust, and pay

them so much money each month. His power was of even greater extent among the half-breeds, for it was here the grafters, under his dictation, gathered and laid plans to acquire all the Kozart lands.

For years oil had been discovered in paying quantities in various parts of the domain, but Hatfield had made no lucky strikes. Then during an Indian dance one night, a mighty roar and rumbling broke loose under Mother Earth. The ground shook, trees trembled, as sand, mud and water shot into the air on ground which a Kozart had tilled for years. An old derrick, which had been abandoned, was ripped and blown into a mass of splinters by a twenty-thousand-barrel gusher, and over night Jake Hatfield became the owner of the well.

So excited were the red men, so ignorant of what the tremendous noise was all about, and so superstitious of everything now being done by Hatfield, that they rushed back into the hills and remained in total seclusion for days. When they did venture forth, Silas Hood explained to them in graphic pictures that a terrible earthquake had maimed and killed hundreds of people, even white men. The Kozarts were so upset that they seldom left their little huts. And, as a further scheme to prey upon their superstitions and to carry out the effect of an earthquake, Hatfield ordered fences torn down, wagons demolished, and even two squaws were shot, their bodies laid in the road which led to the hiding place of the red men.

By pursuing these tactics, many Kozarts were inveigled into selling their lands and leaving the country. Soon they were destitute, and some of their somber faces may now be seen in a dog house home on various Indian reservations.

The Kozart oil gusher caused thousands of people to rush into the Indian country, and hundreds of derricks

shot up over night. Promoters, prospectors, and fugitives filled the land. A main railroad line was built to Kozart, and that section became one of the richest oil producing fields in the world. Land which had been purchased at one time for a dollar and a quarter an acre now sold as high as fifty thousand for a single lot.

This same year, other newly discovered oil fields added to the state's fame and wealth. Many Osage Indians became immensely rich and received as high as a thousand dollars a week; some received that amount each day for royalties on oil land. But they were so ignorant and unaccustomed to such fabulous wealth that they fell easy prey to grafters ever clutching at their throats.

As more years elapsed and Hatfield became a man of greater money and power, he began gradually to push the Kozarts back into the hills and to the eastern desert line, promising them that any new policies adopted by the government along the lines of schooling, royalties, and general protection, he would carry out, and that his treatment would be better than that of anyone else.

For instance, many of one tribe he sent to the hills in the eastern borders of the Kozart Nation, allowing each family to draw the trifling sum of fifty dollars each month. This was supposed to support them. Others he sent to the open prairie country, near the western border of the Kozart nation, where money could be made by raising cattle. Some of the Chickasaws and Seminoles he sent to the Shatoga River bottoms, while in the extreme northern part he put the Cherokees on land that would not support existence, but which later became the greatest oil field of the Kozart Nation.

Hatfield's organization became a gigantic institution, an affair of departments, boards, executive staffs, committees, a criminal force that generated power, and to aid

his schemes he had now placed Bob Blackburn in office as county attorney.

Hatfield made frequent visits to Opatonga City, Chicago and New York; and in dress and speech he had now become well-groomed, pretentious and pompous. For several years after he had reached the Indian country, he had had no inclination to read books. He had ignored and despised the Bible, and all social laws. However, to aid him socially, politically and financially, as hitherto stated, he had for some time been reading a great deal at home.

"We've got to play the game," he said to Silas Hood and Luke Berry one day while they were talking on the sidewalk in front of the bank.

"And how?" asked Hood.

"Got to have a school and a church."

"W-h-a-t!" exclaimed Hood, stunned.

"Yes," returned Hatfield calmly, soberly looking straight ahead.

"Air ye gittin' t' be plum' good, Jake?" asked Luke rather meekly, with a puzzled expression.

"No, Luke, not at all, not a damn bit!" Hatfield muttered abruptly, his face flushing slightly. "But, you see—'live and learn,' " he added.

"Gosh! I know'd hit warn't lik' Jake t' go'n git re-lijun," said Luke, kicking the curb nervously with the heel of his boot.

"But the government dogs are getting plentiful," continued Jake.

"Sho' tootin'," agreed Luke, lifting his clumsy fist to his thick lips, and between his two forefingers squirting a generous stream of tobacco juice half way across the street.

"You're right," echoed Hood.

"An hit'll sho' tikkle Florence, 'cause ye knowd, she wants Wathena t' git'n edjkashun, an' doncha knowd, fellers, thur kid's smart a'ready!"

It may seem strange that both Hatfield and Hood had improved in speech and dress, and Luke Berry remained so unchanged. But Luke was a type all by himself. Florence's efforts to smooth out his crudities had proven unavailing. His freckles were still prominent, his unruly hair still stood stiff and straight. He was ever chewing tobacco. His mountain dialect and his hearty laugh were always the same. But he was kind when sober, and people as a whole loved him, despite his faults. In fact no one could look into the open countenance of Luke Berry and not perceive that he was good at heart through and through, even if stupid in ignorance, and his rugged mountain speech and ways.

No education! No moral training! It was but natural that Luke should come under Hatfield's dominance and become a tool in his hands.

"Yep, Wathena's gittin' so she kin play on thur organ, too," said Luke with a happy grin.

"Yes," assented Hatfield, "she's the prettiest child in Kozart, and you as freckled as a sun-dried horsefly."

Luke laughed.

"I often wonder what became of her father."

Luke's freckles seemed to flame into balls of fire.

"Oh hell! That's a bust!" Hatfield told his guilty and cruel self. And then, in an effort to make amends, as he walked into the bank he said, "Each freckle means a brave deed, Luke." But the remark could not be erased from Berry's mind.

Befuddled he hung his head in shamed humiliation, thrust his thick red hands into his slouchy pockets, walked up the street and propped himself against a telephone

post, reflectively. He gritted his teeth, and his mind flashed back to the day the baby was born—to a certain day at the county seat when he had become enraged and rushed home intent on murder—then to the night Doc Hickey thought Wathena was dying—how he had prayed, and how happy he was when she recovered.

While Luke was thus bitter and reminiscent, Wathena and her mother came along. They had brought him a basket of lunch.

"'Ell! I hain't hungry tudday!" he snarled. "I'd go git muh eats ef I wuz. Take yer dam' kid 'ome!"

Wathena cried—she did not understand.

"Father has been drinking," Florence said quietly, as she took Wathena by the hand and hastened down the street, her heart weary and heavy as a ball of lead. As she passed by the bank Jake Hatfield emerged, spoke graciously, and seemed solicitous about their welfare. He noticed Wathena's golden hair, her dimples, the fair skin, her graceful movements, her astounding beauty; and he narrowed his eyes and with a calculating smile thought complaisantly, "Let's see—one, two, three years—not so long, and she'll be sixteen—a woman. Just the right age!"

Although Luke Berry knew little of pride, and less of social life, he had at least hoped no one would ever know of the sorrow of his early married life, and that Wathena should never know how he had once accused her mother. But, disturbed over what Jake had said, he went into an illicit bar and spent the night drinking and living over the past. With a growing resentment, he began to contrast Hatfield's power and money with his own financial state—he had never gotten ahead, he was in debt all the time. Many promises Hatfield had made were never kept. Even since oil was discovered, making other men rich,

Luke was no better off than before. These reflections only increased his turbulence of mind, and one drink followed another.

The following day Hatfield apologized, and assured Luke he had been only joking. Luke listened to the explanation, but suffered nevertheless. The sting of the insinuation could not be erased by any apology that Hatfield made.

In the ensuing years Hatfield not only took an active part in organizing and endorsing a school and a church and having them built in Kozart, but he also secretly bought machinery, employed Tate Wheeler, a clever editor, and began to publish a daily paper called "The Kozart Herald," in which he could play himself up as Banker, Social King, and a Political Leader, thereby paving the road straight to the governor's chair.

About two years after his paper first appeared in Kozart his daughter came home.

Of Edna Hatfield little was known by the Kozart people, for she had spent most of her life in New York, making visits to Kozart but once or twice a year. There was nothing in Kozart to amuse her, no people on her social plane. For these reasons her home visits had been brief and infrequent. But after graduating from a finishing school in New York, she decided to make her home with her father, and her return to Kozart was the sensation of that section. When she arrived she not only found an elaborate and pretentious mansion awaiting her, but she had motor cars, a maid, and anything else she desired.

The new home was built in Italian style, with wide verandas and attractive balconies. It stood on the peak of an oval hill which overlooked the new thriving city, now numbering several thousand inhabitants. An artist

had been employed to decorate the home, and the interior was beautifully adorned with gorgeous Italian hangings, and luxurious, rightly-toned Persian rugs. The chairs, divans and tables were all specially designed in Italian style. Massive tables were supported by classically carved caryatids, and a magnificent pipe-organ had been installed. All this for Edna's edification.

Thus had the discovery of oil, and the continual swindling of the Kozarts, swept a daring, illiterate young man from a crude cabin in the mountains of Kentucky into a pretentious mansion filled with servants. In the natural course of events, with his astute mind, Hatfield had passed the stage of being ill at ease; and, although not highly versed in social usages, still evidencing a strain of crude mannerisms, he was now no longer the rude person of the territorial days.

The day his daughter reached Kozart and fell into her father's embrace, the gaping crowd watched her in awe. She was wearing a sable coat, and carried a Pekinese pup with protruding eyes. In her hand was a collection of baggage checks which called for trunks, suitcases, hat boxes and bags of such description as to make one think of an Oriental queen or a movie star.

Edna was neither too tall nor too short, but of perfect figure. She had a full face, well rounded chin and cheeks, and deep, flashing black eyes that sparkled like polished ebony. And, as if to impress the crowd with her beauty, she lifted her stunning hat from her head and revealed a mass of raven-black hair, brushed down flat and parted in the center, a diamond comb adorning each side above the ears.

"You are pretty as a picture!" exclaimed her father as she stepped from the train. "And your birthday present is here to meet you," he added with a smile.

"Oh, I thought surely, daddy, you had forgotten it. You said nothing about it in your last letter," she said excitedly.

"You've met Luke Berry, Edna," her father said, with a nod in Berry's direction.

"I do not recall it," Edna said haughtily, surveying Luke with a scornful glance.

Luke reached nervously for her suitcase, tripped over his own feet and brushed against her. His hat fell off, and his mop of coarse hair stood straight on end as he offered awkward apologies.

"Fool!" she snapped. "Can't you be more careful?"

"I'm shore sorry, Miss Edna. Hit hain't——"

"Spare me your silly excuses!" she retorted.

"Oh, you don't understand Luke, daughter. He's all right," interceded Hatfield. "He is still as clumsy as ever."

"But how on earth can you bear to have such scum around, dad?" Edna inquired. "He hasn't brushed his teeth in a year."

Luke, overhearing her, was crushed.

"Bring the Ford to Edna," commanded Hatfield, as he winked at Luke.

"Sho' tootin'," Luke replied, and walked away understandingly.

"No Ford for me!" Edna indignantly objected.

"Why not?" asked her father.

"Absurd!" she said, shrugging her shoulders.

"That's the kind I drive, Edna," Hatfield said, forcing back a smile.

"I wouldn't be caught even looking at one of those country wagons, much less driving one!" she said abruptly, drawing her sable coat more closely about her.

Presently Hatfield's negro chauffeur driving a luxuri-

ous sedan whirled up to the curb. The machine was custom-made. It had long, sweeping lines; the body was a rich French gray, the top a delicate cream-color, and the wheels ebony. Bumpers, hub caps, automatic ventilating windshield, air purifier, rear vision motoring rack mirror and signal lights, all were silver trimmed. Its custom interior was replete with every detail of luxury, biscuit-colored broadcloth, exquisite broad lace trim, French silk shades, silk toggle grips, opal iridescent lights, smoking set, vanity case, and interior door-handles, robe rail and dashboard instruments plated in gold. Comfort, elegance—luxury supreme.

Edna was thrilled. "Oh daddy dear!" she said with delight. "It's beautiful! Wonderful!" And she flung her arms around his neck.

The chauffeur opened the door of the car, Edna stepped in, followed by her father, and the machine was driven away, with Luke Berry standing, staring after it, and scratching his head. He was thinking of the remark Edna had made, and that the only car he had ever had was a cheap touring car, and it was second-hand.

Within a month Edna Hatfield was the talk of the Kozart country. Her beauty, grace and general culture from years in New York had made her dazzling to the eyes of the more commonplace people.

While brilliant musicales, dinner-dances and other social affairs, to which only the elect were bidden, were being given continuously in the most elaborate style in the Hatfield mansion, conditions in the Berry home were pathetic.

Florence pleaded, prayed and tried as best she knew how to keep Luke at home; but since Edna had arrived, her vampiric and voluptuous personality seemed to grate on Berry's nerves. Then, too, Hatfield was becoming

more exclusive all the time, less considerate, even to the extent of ignoring Luke when in his presence. This all preyed upon Berry's mind, and his indulgence in drink and the shame consequent therefrom resulted in the tragedy of a sick, neglected and grief-stricken wife.

CHAPTER XI

AND still Hatfield's power increased, becoming so gigantic in its scope that control of the situation by the government men seemed an impossibility. Investigators were busy, but they were seriously handicapped because of the many obstacles encountered in and around Kozart. The Indians were accused of every crime committed. Gordon Haines and Calvin Pape, investigators, had disappeared, and no trace of them could be found. Forceful letters were sent to Washington by the honest people in Kozart and other sections of the state. But conditions did not improve.

Moreover, about the time the government was to begin extensive and stringent operations, the World War came on, and the officials who had been assigned to Kozart were re-assigned to duties in France, or to investigation service where America's interests were involved. Thus the Kozarts were left in a perilous condition. Many of the redskins volunteered, and crossed the seas to fight and face death. But Hatfield and his infamous group continued to deceive, cheat, rob, and even kill, whenever money or land could be gained.

By a year after the Armistice, crime had been increased and trachoma spread with such dangerous rapidity that a group of Kozart people, led by Chief Bearskin, demanded a hearing before Captain Lonnie Mitchell, who was secretly working in the interest of the Indians.

It was an interesting morning for Captain Mitchell, because he had always contended to other officials in

Washington, first, that many of the Indians had been overlooked, and that individuals were deceiving the government; and further, that the people in the Kozart country had never had any chance to become educated and be useful citizens.

While it is true the Chief was dressed in his buckskin, beads, tassels, fringes and feathers, yet his flow of language, his poise and majestic dignity made him more like a well-educated business man than an Indian Chief. There was no marked accent to his voice, such as one would expect from an Indian; none of the old traits shone in his eyes, none of the characteristics so often read of in books. And, in his simple and sincere way, he made it plain that he wanted to live as the white man wished him to live; but he desired his people to be given a chance and not be robbed and cheated because of their ignorance of business and money matters.

"Do you know the real condition of the Kozart people?" asked Chief Bearskin, as he gazed sternly into the Captain's face.

Mitchell nodded his head.

"More than two million dollars worth of Kozart property is controlled entirely by Jake Hatfield and his friends in the Kozart Nation. Because some of our tribes are incompetent, is no reason that all of them are to be considered helpless and ignored as though they had neither heart nor soul," said the Chief firmly.

Mitchell was thinking deeply.

"Do you know," said the Chief, "that in four separate sections of the Kozart country, people are begging food and shelter, and are refused any aid whatever? Hatfield is even building a ninety-thousand-dollar bridge and charging the expense against the Kozart fund he is handling for them."

"You mean across the Shatoga River?"

"Yes. None of our people had any knowledge of such legislation, and the tribes were not even represented before Congress. That's not all—a thousand other men will cross the bridge in motor cars to every lonely Kozart who creeps over it on a bony horse."

Chief Bearskin had visited the Shatoga river-bottom section, and knew whereof he spoke. The bridge was supposed to aid the Kozarts, yet not a red man lived within thirty miles of the site. The bridge was solely to aid tourists and oil magnates who were speculating along the river bottoms, and the Indians were forced to pay for the comfort of Hatfield and his friends.

"Only one doctor and one nurse take care of seven thousand Kozarts in one of our reservations. That's what Jake Hatfield calls a square deal in medical aid," said the grim-faced redskin.

Mitchell nodded his head again.

"Moneyed people are killing my people," said the Chief, "selling and giving them poison-whiskey, robbing them, cheating them, attacking our young women. And no one seems to care. The foods in our schools are covered with flies," he went on to say. "Politicians spread rumors that we are all wealthy, healthy, happy, and doing better than ever before. But it's a lie—a lie! I tell you, many of us are sick, starving, and our death-rate is increasing terribly. Why don't you help us?"

"God knows I'm willing," Mitchell said firmly.

"It is not only Hatfield," the Chief went on to explain. "There is no chance for the Indian in any reservation, for he is dependent upon the agent, and can hardly move his hand or tongue without the consent of the men over him. Day after day and year after year the Indian sits around with folded arms and fallen face waiting for

promises to be fulfilled and finally loses all hope, energy, or any ambition he ever had. If he is not allowed any privilege, or at least given a chance to develop what mind he has, what is to be expected of him. I tell you, Captain, there is but one chance for the Indian in the reservation, that is, to leave and go out into the business world and mix with other types and races. That's where he will improve. Thousands of people from other countries come to America each year, who can neither read nor write, and who, when they arrive, are more ignorant than any Indian ever was, yet by contact with the people many of them become leading citizens in all lines of endeavor. That's what the Indian would do if not pushed off into reservations and made to believe he is dependent upon another race. Hatfield makes promises—promises that he never keeps, promises he never intended to keep. It is the Indian who makes no promise that he cannot keep."

New determination enveloped Mitchell's face. Turning to the Chief, he said:

"Go back to Opatonga City, Chief Bearskin. God being my guide, I shall put a stop to the crime in Kozart."

His voice rang with true sincerity, courage and promise of aid. That day the Chief, his valiant heart beating bravely for his fellow Indians, a feeling of exultation gripping his soul, departed for Opatonga with implicit confidence in Captain Lonnie Mitchell.

Within an hour after Chief Bearskin left the office, Captain Mitchell and his executive lieutenant were in the Council Chamber discussing the situation.

"This crime wave in Kozart must cease," declared Mitchell.

"It's a problem," responded Deputy Clark.

"But it must end," Mitchell stated emphatically, as he struck the desk with the palm of his hand, his eyes fastened on Clark.

"What is the solution?" asked Secretary Holly.

"We must find a way," Mitchell said.

"It seems that the oil men, many bankers, and even high officials in the Kozart country are working for the downfall of the Indians."

"It's not only in the Kozart country," said Holly.

"Quite right," Mitchell agreed.

"But we are too big a nation to disgrace the map of this country with such shameful and selfish acts," said Mitchell. "Understand me, boys, there is nothing personal about the matter. I am not an Indian, but the love of justice causes me to fairly boil with indignation every time I read of these crimes. Think how utterly helpless the Kozart people are in Hatfield's hands!"

"We have one man," said Clark, "who can solve the Kozart situation."

"You mean Henderson?" asked Holly.

"No, young Roger Coleman."

"He's only a boy," reminded Mitchell.

"Keenest man in our service today—a square shooter, and if my memory serves me correctly, Roger Coleman is part Indian, too," remarked Clark.

"So much the better," Mitchell added, and, turning to Secretary Holly, he said, "Bring me index four twelve, section five. We'll make sure." At his command, Holly stepped into the adjoining room, opened the cabinet, and extracted an application which had been filled out and signed by Roger the day he had applied for a position.

"What does his application say?" Mitchell asked.

"Shall I read it?" Holly replied.

"Yes."

"Well, let me see," Holly said, as he glanced over the blank. "His full name is Roger J. Coleman; age twenty-six; American, was born in Opatonga. Mother and father dead. Resided in Lazy Point, Kentucky, when a

child. Was in the air service during the World War, brought down twelve planes—never wounded. He does not smoke, drink, or gamble. And he adds a postscript—it's rather amusing."

"Read it," said Mitchell.

"I recall but little of my boyhood days. I remember living a while with a big Indian, but gypsies kidnapped me. I ran away from them in Kansas, went to Denver, sold papers on the streets, later bummed a ride to Chicago; worked in a soap factory, and as a waiter two months; but got a job in a clothing store as helper—in six months was made manager. Saved my money, studied at nights, and had just finished in law when the war came on. If you employ me, I shall always prove loyal, go anywhere you send me, take any chances. And I am not afraid of any living man.' It's a humdinger," Holly added.

"Gee! The boy wasn't ashamed to tell his life," said Clark, as Holly finished reading the report, smiled, and handed it to Captain Mitchell.

"Nothing to indicate Indian blood," said Mitchell.

"No. But Coleman had brands under his right arm and over his heart, for I saw them many times when we were in France," Clark informed.

"Ever ask him about them?" queried Mitchell.

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He was evasive, but I bet you a Stetson hat he's part Indian."

"Why not send for Coleman?" Holly asked.

Chief Mitchell pondered a moment. He then turned to Clark, and said: "We can't expect any honest help from any of the officials in Kozart."

"Let's send Coleman out there," Clark suggested.

Mitchell paused a moment. "That's just what I will do." And, pushing the buzzer for a call-boy, he dictated a telegram to Coleman.

Monday morning, October third, Roger Coleman stepped from a taxicab at the Capitol grounds and went directly to Captain Mitchell's office. Coleman was six feet tall, of athletic build, with good nose and forehead, steel-blue eyes, a sunny smile and a fair complexion tanned by outdoor duties. His quickness of step, and firm, strong face created confidence wherever he went.

"Greetings!" said Captain Mitchell cordially, as Coleman entered the office.

"Good morning, Captain—how are you?" Coleman returned.

"Fine, thank you. Be seated. I'm transferring Henderson to Virginia, and I want to know more about you," said Mitchell, smiling kindly, as if to soften the seriousness of his countenance.

"Hope I have not made a blunder, Captain."

"Not at all, Roger. But how would you like the Indian country for a change?"

"I'll go wherever you send me, Captain. Why?"

"Are you part Indian, Roger?"

The question came as such a surprise that for a moment Coleman sat puzzled.

Mitchell spoke quickly, as was his usual custom. "State the truth, as I know you will."

"I'm not sure," Coleman replied, somewhat embarrassed.

"Will you remove your coat and shirt?"

Perplexed, Coleman hesitated a moment; then said: "Why, of course, Captain. But what does it all mean?"

"I will explain. Remove your coat and shirt," Mitchell insisted.

"Certainly," came Coleman's courteous reply, as he threw off his coat, opened his shirt, and exposed his naked body above the waist.

"Do you know the meaning of this mark?" asked Captain Mitchell, pointing to the faint brand of an arrow just above Coleman's heart.

"No, I do not, Captain."

"Have you any idea?"

"No, it's been there ever since I can remember." Raising his arm, Coleman said, "Look here."

Mitchell gazed at the lower part of his arm, on which were other brands, also embedded in his flesh by the use of Indian paint when Coleman was merely a child.

"So you don't know what they mean?" asked Mitchell, curiously.

"I do not."

"Have you ever inquired about them?"

"No. For some years when a boy, I tried in every way to erase them, but they would never fade."

"Do you remember your mother?" Captain Mitchell further inquired.

"No, Captain, I do not—I only wish I could." And a shadow of sadness flickered across his strong face.

"Remember your father?"

Roger reflected a moment, then proceeded: "Father was killed when I was a child. I recall only a few of the events of his life."

"But you don't know the meaning of the brands on your body?"

"No, I do not, Captain."

"Well, I do," said Mitchell firmly.

"What are they?" Roger asked with eager interest.

Mitchell paused a moment, then said earnestly: "Coleman, your father must have been a fine character—loyal,

true-blue, and a friend of the Indians, for the marks on your body are the brands of honor, according to the red man's creed."

"Is that really so?" asked Coleman, becoming more interested all the time, now that his suspense was removed.

"Yes, and you can be proud of it, Coleman. I am proud of you. Few people understand the Indians. But, let me tell you, I am one man in Washington whom dishonest politicians cannot buy, and if it is within my power and it's the last thing I ever do, I am going to put a stop to the work of filibusters and swindlers in the Kozart Nation."

"Well, any intelligent man knows that the Kozarts have been badly treated," Coleman answered.

"Yes. From the records you will notice there is one man down there who boasts of forty-one notches in his gun, and gloats over being able to clip the ears off a running Indian at thirty paces."

"I thought the Kozarts were getting rich through oil."

"The Kozart oil money," Mitchell said, "is of no more value to Indians than a toy pistol is to the dethroned Kaiser of Germany."

"Do you mean the Kozart has no right over his own Kozart land?"

"Exactly. He can't sell, trade, or lease it without the stamped approval of Jake Hatfield."

"Will the Indians work?" Coleman asked.

"Certainly, but being shoved from one place to another, without tools or equipment to farm or to make a livelihood, how can they keep strength, have faith, or do any real work on half rations? Hatfield does not want them to be educated or to work. He wants to see them starved out. Did you know that?"

Coleman's expression was set. "No," he replied.

"Illicit saloons are wide open, trachoma and tuberculosis spreading, and two agents sent from this office have mysteriously disappeared," Mitchell added.

"Clark wrote me of that," said Coleman.

"I want you to go to Kozart immediately," Mitchell continued.

Coleman looked away for a moment, thinking of what Gordon Haines had once written him—a blazing sun, intense heat, dry and dusty summers, and the most adventurous country he had ever traversed. Then it dawned upon him that Gordon Haines was one of the men Captain Mitchell had just referred to as having mysteriously disappeared. Coleman clenched his hands nervously, but suddenly—as though something had snapped in his mind—releasing all semblance of fear, his face was illuminated. Turning to Mitchell, he said, "Captain, I am ready to go any time you say the word."

"All right, Roger. Check this report. I'll be back in an hour."

Mitchell then left the room.

Coleman scanned the papers quickly, but caught every word. The report convinced him that Jake Hatfield was one of the higher-ups, although he no longer took a part in crime; but he was the master-mind in Kozart.

"What do you think of the report?" asked Mitchell upon his return to the room.

"It's most outrageous, the most shameful one I've ever read," said Coleman, with indignation.

"Did you read about the ghost farm?"

"Yes," Coleman replied. "It certainly sounds spooky—evidently no one entering it ever comes out alive. But I'm not afraid of ghosts!"

"Daring is sometimes unwise," Mitchell reminded him.

"Oh, I'll be sure of what I do."

"There is an Indian in Opatonga who may assist you," Coleman."

"Who is he?"

"Chief Bearskin."

"You mean a real Indian Chief."

"Yes, and a noble man," assured Mitchell. "He is over ninety years old. He reads without glasses, is active as a cat, understands all Indian signs, and speaks all their languages."

"Has any other investigator ever met him?"

"Yes—and what is most strange, he refused to aid any one of them. His opinions and decisions are infallible. He told me that at one glance he knows whether to trust or distrust any man. Two men I sent out there fell in with the swindling gang. Haines was kidnapped or killed, and Chief Bearskin is dubious about any man we send now. But I want you to meet him and show him your chest, that he may see the brands over your heart."

"They might win him over," reflected Coleman.

"They will. And there is something else, Roger," Mitchell informed him. "Some time ago a fanatic on religion came into this office and told us he had lived in the Kozart country in the early days, and knew that he could aid us. He offered his services without remuneration. We paid little attention to him then. But a week later he came back, seemed sane, and convinced me that he knew the leaders of crimes in Kozart. Then the third time he called he talked only of religion, and acted so queerly, that naturally I did not employ him."

"Seems strange."

"Yes, it is. I believe the man was sincere, but I have never seen him since."

"Do the Kozarts vote?" asked Coleman.

"Certainly they do."

"I never knew that before."

"Any Indian becomes a voting citizen the moment he receives his land allotment and registers," said Mitchell. Then, "You are ready to go?"

"I am at your service, Captain. When shall I leave?"

"All right, Roger. You will leave Monday. Mail no reports from Kozart, but take them to Arthur Davis in Opatonga City. Here is a letter of introduction to him. He was a former agent, but is on the square, and you can handle all communications through him."

A sleek, alert young office boy entered the room, and reminded Captain Mitchell that he was to attend an official meeting. The Captain glanced at his watch, gripped Roger's hand, and said: "Holly will see to your reservation and credentials. Goodbye, Coleman, and may God be with you." Then hurriedly left the room.

While waiting for Secretary Holly to bring him his railroad ticket and credentials, Coleman gazed about the room meditatively. "Well," he mused, "now what do these people look like, anyhow? Indians—bandits—grizzly whiskers, I wonder."

A little later his speculations were broken by Holly's appearance with the papers, and Coleman, after a brief chat, took his departure, with only a meager conception of the thrilling days before him.

CHAPTER XII

MONDAY morning found Coleman seated in the Pullman of the west-bound passenger train, and four days and nights they roared through towns and villages, valleys and timber country, traversed mountains and rolling prairies. Then, alighting from the train at Opatonga City, he caught the Rock Hill Special going East.

Throughout the journey he lived in dreams of what the Kozart country looked like, what kind of people he would meet, how they would act, and what kind of a reception he would have. To be sure, part of his early childhood had been spent near the Nation, but he had only a faint memory of the place.

As he neared the junction where he would change cars for Kozart, the sun was fast descending through ruby clouds in the western horizon, and evening shadows crept over the forest of blackjack, postoak, dogwood and pecans. The leaves, nipped by an early frost, had ripened into brilliant autumn colors—crimson, purple and brown.

Glancing out the car window, he saw what seemed a valley of snow, dotted with black balls. It was a field of cotton, and between the rows, bareheaded, big-handed negroes bobbed above the giant stalks with machine-like accuracy, plucking the fleecy down from the open bolls and flinging it into long brown sacks that were strapped to their shoulders and dragging behind them.

"Peniska! Peniska! Change cars for Kozart," called the negro brakeman.

Gamblers, promoters, cowboys, oil workers, foreign laborers, and adamant faces—it was a motley crowd that hurried from the train and boarded the Oil town Special. An hour later they reached their destination.

The Kozart station being in the heart of the business section, Coleman strolled up to Main and Broadway, which was the center of the busy little city. On three corners of the intersection were buildings of stone, brick or concrete, while on the southwest corner stood the Hatfield Block, the most pretentious structure of the kind in the state. It was two stories high, of white brick, with recessed windows and fancy tile trimmings. The corner was impressive, for four handsome black marble pillars stood on each side of the spacious entrance that led into the elaborately finished offices of the Hatfield Bank.

Coleman's first impression was none too pleasing, for he soon detected wide-open bars and illicit dens packed with hilarious crowds, all doing a thriving business. He noted, too, the sunken eyes and wrinkled faces of the red men, and the many squaws who, with papooses strapped on their backs, sat on the sidewalks, their laps filled with Indian wares which they were offering for sale to the tourists.

The following two days he spent as any prospector might have done. He hired an automobile, drove about the city, out into the surrounding country, and finally concluded to lease an office. "I know what I'll do," he told himself. "I'll lease an office in the Hatfield Block. I'll keep books of fiction on my desk and, instead of working in the usual way, I'll be frank and open in what I have to say, but will appear absorbed in business and so ambitious that neither Hatfield or any of his group will suspect me. Yes, and I'll attend church, and will pretend that the Indians amuse me, that they are clownish, and freely express

my opinion. In this disguise I will probably be more safe than by evading questions and leaving myself open to suspicion as a government man."

"Now, let me see," he went on. "One of the first things I must do will be to meet Hatfield. I'll make a deposit in his bank, do business with him, appear unconcerned about all things, particularly those that seem most important to him. Yes, that's the idea."

In a day or so the way was paved for him to meet Hatfield and many of his co-workers. From the beginning it seemed that luck was playing into his hands, for he made small deposits on an oil lease, expecting in the natural course of events to lose, only to learn that a gusher came in near the lease. Then he took other leases, and, regardless of what or where his speculations were, his investments seemed to double in profits. Soon he became known as "Lucky Coleman," and the nickname clung to him.

Roger Coleman's power lay in the fact that his body and mind were almost entirely under perfect control. He was always at ease. There was no inclination to overstate, no attempt to deceive, nor any effort on his part to make himself appear anything except honorable, simple and natural. He talked little, observed much, was a sympathetic listener, unselfish and generous, and soon became the most popular man in Kozart.

Hatfield's attention was, of course, attracted by Coleman's personality, his ability, and what people termed "luck" in his oil ventures. One day, when Coleman entered the bank, Hatfield greeted him cordially, exclaiming, "Well, how do you do it, young man?"

"Do what?" returned Coleman.

"Know where to buy oil leases. Everything you touch turns into money, I understand."

"It's all luck, Mr. Hatfield."

"Well, young fellow, all others don't seem to have that kind of luck in Kozart."

"Bob Blackburn says I'm a bookworm. Maybe it's because I read the Bible." Coleman purposely laughed as though he meant this remark as a joke, but he was curiously and intensely interested to know what Hatfield's reaction would be.

"Well, I don't believe in the damned Bible," was the abrupt reply.

"Why not?" quizzed Coleman.

"Oh, hell!" Hatfield contemptuously remarked. "It's a lot of tommyrot, means nothing. Praying and shouting fools don't build hotels and banks, nor dig oil wells."

"And don't you think, Mr. Hatfield, that without some kind of religion the country would be overflowing with an ignorant mass of people?" Coleman asked.

"Ignorant hell! Religion is only for fools and fanatics. Surely you are not one of them?"

"Well, we have to have a little fun, you know. They say argument adds to a man's experience," Coleman replied, laughing again as though it was all a joke, and then walked out of the bank.

This was his first contact with Jake Hatfield, whose manner and conversation plainly revealed to Coleman his code of living.

Within a few weeks Coleman's secret accomplishments were such that his reports to Washington brought other service men to Kozart. Criminals in the Kozart country were arrested, but before their trials began, County Attorney Blackburn threw their cases out of court on the ridiculous ground of "lack of evidence."

Silas Hood was still the Postmaster and his brother Claud chief of police. For fear that some of his mes-

sages might be intercepted, Coleman pretended to have a sweetheart in Shatoga, a nearby town, to which place he made weekly trips, and from there boarded a train or motored to Opatonga City, thirty miles west. There he met Arthur Davis, in whom Mitchell had implicit confidence. It was through this medium that Coleman's communication with Washington officials continued uninterruptedly.

Though it was not shown in his reports, Coleman learned that shortly after statehood, federal authorities had made investigations of various crimes and murders and turned the cases over to the County Attorney; but they were held up at the State Capitol, because of certain rulings to the effect that the Federal Government had no jurisdiction over such matters. This, of course, handicapped the federal officers and other service men in their activities, as well as the prosecution of the criminals. It was not until after the United States Supreme Court reversed such rulings that the officers were able to pursue a definite course, but as soon as they began to make progress and were pressing closely on the heels of the outlaws, these investigators mysteriously disappeared and were never heard of again.

What struck Coleman as most pathetic of all was the iniquitous attitude toward the ignorant men and Indians, the utter disregard for them, and the contemptible way in which Hatfield dealt with them. For instance, he took mortgages on their crops, cattle, horses, wagons and even household goods; and when payments were due—sometimes before—he foreclosed their mortgages and forced the helpless people into the streets. Circumstances of sickness, stormy weather or misfortune of whatsoever kind, caused no leniency on his part.

Anyone who undertook to criticize his acts was

promptly ordered to leave the country; oftentimes they did not even have this privilege, but disappeared as Hatfield directed.

Coleman learned that Luke Berry, the sheriff, was a trusted killer, and that Hatfield had taught him to beat his wife, to burn her fingers, and to tie her to the bed to keep her from leaving the house. These cruelties were imposed, however, only when Luke was under the influence of drink. He also heard that Luke had a daughter, beautiful and talented, but she was constantly humiliated and always kept down, despite the fact that the people of Kozart had learned to love and respect her.

Coleman began to wonder about Berry, for there was something very unusual about the man, something pathetic and distressing. He always wore the curious, meaningless smile that betokens ignorance. His natural Scotch accent, commingled with mountaineer dialect, tinged with a southern drawl, made him comical and as amusing as a clown. When in Hatfield's presence, however, he wore a pitiful aspect, for he was too hopelessly ignorant to know his own mind and in consequence was only a tool, a killer—not by nature, but through association with Hatfield and his kind.

It might seem strange that any man who openly praised the law, religion, education, even frequently discussed the Indians, had not made himself obnoxious and an enemy to Hatfield, but Coleman was so open, simple and modest, and so unpretentious in his manner, that Hatfield admired him. Then, too, Coleman's vision and luck in oil lease deals, together with his apparent sagacity in other business matters, prompted Hatfield to seek him often for consultation.

Upon realizing that he was winning Hatfield's confidence, and recalling the rumors concerning his flirtatious daughter Edna and how she boasted of capturing the

hearts of men, there came to Coleman like a flash the daring thought: "I'll ignore her, seem unconcerned in her presence. She's just the type of woman who will be likely to pursue me, I believe—I hope so, at least. I'll be invited to her home and mingle in her kind of society. In this way I'll learn of the higher-ups. It's a good thought. I'll follow it."

The next idea he thought of was to learn more of the ghost farm. "Everyone in Kozart is talking about the mysterious place," he reflected. "I'll go and see it for myself." So late one afternoon he drove out into the country alone, parked his car and walked out across a field to a position where he could see the mysterious forest he had heard so much about.

The regular weekly tourist crowd had parked their cars on the opposite side of the road, and a group of men and women travelers was standing some hundred yards away when, suddenly, as darkness crept on, sure enough! hideous figures ascended above the tops of the trees. The ghastly face and haunting eyes of a beast appeared at the edge of the underbrush, weird sounds came from within the place. The tourists gasped with fear, turned to walk away, then glanced back—and the mysterious face had disappeared.

"Is it real, or is there some scheme back of this phantom place? Some day I shall know," Coleman declared, as he hastened to his car and returned to Kozart, knowing that the rumors at least were true, for he had seen the startling apparitions.

Many times he met Edna Hatfield on the street, in stores, or as she was entering or leaving her father's bank. Sometimes he would speak to her about the ghost, other times he passed by without seeming recognition. This all brought about the exact situation he wished to create.

It was one of life's little ironies that, just when Coleman was in his deepest plot to connect Hatfield's daughter with his investigations, he should happen to meet and fall in love with a young woman whose life had been a bitter struggle, but whose love and devotion for her despairing mother were the most beautiful things that had ever come under his notice.

One day when he was seated at the counter in the City Drug Store, Luke Berry and his daughter Wathena came in and seated themselves near him.

"Howdy, 'Lucky'?" greeted Luke, as he awkwardly turned to Coleman.

"Good morning, Sheriff," was Coleman's return salutation.

"Hain't ye knowd my daughter Wathena 'fore now?" asked Luke.

"No, I have not had that pleasure. How do you do, Miss Berry?" said Coleman, very courteously.

"Mr. Coleman," Wathena said, softly.

It was a warm day, like an afternoon in the late spring, and Wathena wore a fresh, simply-made dress of white and a small hat, beneath which her lustrous golden hair waved delightfully over her ears. Her eyes were deeply blue, wide and candid, fringed with long, sweeping lashes, and her skin was of the finest texture. A certain clean young purity of soul radiated from her face. Her voice was low and sweet, her figure slender as a willow wand, and she possessed the poise of a debutante.

"Hit's purty good, hain't hit, Wathena?" Luke said, as he lifted his glass to his lips and guzzled down the last drop of a strawberry soda.

Coleman observed Wathena's natural shyness, as well as a tinge of sadness in her wistful eyes—a picture that was destined to remain with him as long as he lived. As

he watched her ill-bred father, he fully realized it was only lack of education and advantages that had forced him to become the unscrupulous working tool of Hatfield—leading a life that could end in nothing but tragedy.

For several days after Coleman had been introduced to Wathena in the drug store, she was constantly on his mind. So was Edna Hatfield. Of the latter he thought as a flippant, precocious and philandering woman, while the esteem he felt for Wathena presented a marked contrast. "What a vast difference between the two!" he said with a hushed voice. "Am I in love? With a killer's daughter!"

It puzzled him to think that Wathena Berry should interest him so. She was the daughter of Luke Berry, the sheriff, and Hatfield's tool. But the more he thought of Wathena, the more harshly his mind surged back to Edna Hatfield. He could not deny that Edna was dashing and beautiful; she handled her motor-car with skill and ease; she was generous, in fact, foolish with her money. She overlooked nothing that she knew would add to her accomplishments and make her more fascinating to men—that was her goal.

"But there is something pathetic about it," Coleman kept saying to himself. "Edna Hatfield has had every advantage a woman could desire. Wathena Berry has had nothing but struggle—no opportunity, a drunken father, and a meek semi-invalid mother; yet beauty beams in her face like roses in the morning sunshine."

Day after day he made it a point to go into the City Drug Store for no other reason than just to glance at Wathena, who was now cashier in the store, pretending, of course, he was there to talk with Dr. Oliver Justice, the owner.

Doctor Justice had been a noted surgeon on the Pa-

cific Coast, but ill health, coupled with overwork and a gambling instinct for oil, had brought him to the Nations. Like Coleman he had come to Kozart unknown, and had also been fortunate in oil leases. There was something most striking about the doctor, something about his poise of manner and erudition that was more in keeping with Coleman's own nature than in anyone else he had met in this district. The two men became friends. Coleman, however, never divulged his real mission to the doctor, nor gave the slightest intimation of his growing interest in Wathena.

Days and weeks went by, and Coleman continued to procure evidence against Hatfield and his reprehensible colleagues. The farther he went, the more clearly he saw into the organization. Particularly he found out about Tom Blackburn, Claud Hood and Luke Berry. These men were heartless and unscrupulous, and this, of course, was an added reason for his trying to suppress the picture of Wathena that so entranced him.

CHAPTER XIII

ONE day when a Road Show Company was appearing in Opatonga City, Coleman went there to get his government mail, and while he was seated in the crowded dining-room of the Wanumbra Hotel, Edna Hatfield entered and was ushered to the only vacant seat—opposite him. Her presence was entirely unexpected, yet Coleman appeared at perfect ease. But Edna, when she sat down, could not disguise her amazement and exclaimed, "Mr. Coleman!"

"How do you do, Miss Hatfield?" he rejoined cordially, rising to his feet. "This is most unexpected—a great pleasure!" He was thinking, "Gosh, she really is beautiful!" Her black eyes were sparkling, her hair smooth and glossy, her lips rosy. All this was accentuated by costly jewels on her fingers, a strand of pearls about her throat, a hand-wrought watch upon her wrist. A perfectly fitting pale gray tailored suit emphasized the graceful slenderness of her figure, while an exquisite silver fox nestled against her full white throat, completing the ensemble.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Coleman?" she asked.

"Oh," he replied, with the calmness of an easy conscience, "just a little jaunt to see something of city life."

"What a false appellation! Did you say—'city'?" she laughed amusedly.

"It's a city to me, Miss Hatfield," he returned, with an apparent tinge of embarrassment.

She was so smart in appearance, so sure of herself, so noticeable in every move she made, that all eyes in the room centered on her. A red-faced Duke, with a sweet-smelling handkerchief protruding from his upper pocket, dropped his monocle into the soup; a corpulent candy salesman, attracted by her smile, awkwardly shook the salt-shaker into his coffee, while a patrician Boston banker sitting a few tables away, abstractedly dipped up peas with his knife; and the head waiter rushed back to the chef exclaiming, "Lawd A'mighty! Dat sho' am de Queen ob Sheba!"

The waiter, who was what southern negroes term "a colored gentleman" stepped to Edna's table. He was immaculate in his white uniform, and a small red rose decorated the lapel of his coat. His coal-black hair was combed flat and shiny, and his teeth were white and perfect. From the gracious bow he made, Edna knew he was not a local product, and since he had been particularly courteous, and in order to please her own vanity, she seized the opportunity to reveal her French to Coleman.

Scanning the menu card, she said affectedly, "*J'aimerais avoir un apéritif.*"

"*Comment voulez-vous l'avoir?*"

"*Donnez-le-moi frappe.*"

Then, "You have no French wine, I suppose?" she said in English.

"No, but I can make a good corn whiskey," he returned soberly.

Noting that the waiter knew her type, and inwardly sorry that she had been so flippant toward him, yet determined to floor him if she could, she asked, "*Pourrai-je avoir un Amer-Picon?*"

"*Je regret que nous n'en avons pas.*"

The waiter's answer was in such good French that for

a moment Edna was puzzled. "Send me the head waiter," she ordered, not to be outdone.

"Oui, est ce que vous aimerez un peu de musique aussi?"

Again the negro waiter had shot back a question that she only partly understood, which caused her to glance up. Then she quickly realized that his whole life had not been spent south of the Mason and Dixon line, and that evidently he had had experience in France and could speak that language more fluently than she could. So she said, "I will just take the dinner."

"Yes, Madam, a pleasure to serve you," he assured her, winking at the other waiters as he walked away.

"Well, that's over," she said in a tone of relief, as she opened her purse, took out a cigarette, lighted it, then inhaled and exhaled nonchalantly, drawling, "Dear me, I'm just dying for a glass of cognac!"

"Impossible in Kozart," Coleman answered.

"Are you kidding me?" she asked.

"No, surely not. I am told it is very difficult to get in this state."

"Perhaps—but don't you drink?"

"No, Miss Hatfield, I never got started somehow."

"Well, you've missed something."

"But drinking doesn't agree with me."

"You don't drink enough—that's your trouble."

"Well, that may be true."

"Everybody drinks these days, that is, everybody worth while," she assured him, lighting her third cigarette, which she withdrew from an elaborately engraved gold case. Then, as she puffed, seeming to enjoy ecstatically the seductive inhalations, she began an educational quiz.

"What do you think of prohibition?"

"It doesn't interest me," he replied.

"But do you approve of it? You know, it is a national issue just now. You either do or do not think it is a good thing."

"Well, Miss Hatfield, I have given it little thought. You see, I don't drink, and naturally the issue doesn't interest me."

Still lazily puffing at her cigarette, she questioned:

"Ever play the races?"

"No, I don't."

"Ever shake dice?"

"No, don't know how."

"Don't you play poker?"

"No, I don't know one card from another."

Edna neatly flicked the ashes from a partially consumed cigarette, then with a practiced air touched it to the bronze receptacle at her side, and laid it on the tray. Resting both arms on the table, in an attitude of derision, she remarked: "You must be some man!"

"What do you do for diversion?" she resumed.

"Various things."

"Crochet pillows, I suppose."

Coleman's cheeks flushed. "Not that I know of," he replied. He was careful to disguise the feelings that her catechism aroused in him, and he smiled as she proceeded in an apparent effort to embarrass him.

"Do you ever become angry?"

"Very seldom."

"Do you ever fight?"

"Not if I can outrun the other fellow."

"Do you like work?"

"Well, I've heard that failure comes from laziness. I'd like to be a success."

"Do you ever become jealous?"

"No, envy and jealousy are rank poison."

"Anything ever disturb you?"

"Problems prove the mettle of man, Miss Hatfield."

"Do you never lose your temper?"

"A wise man controls his temper. Any fool can lose it."

Her attitude was now bristling with audacity and conceit, and Coleman realized that her failure to disturb him was preying upon her nerves. He was accomplishing exactly what he had set out to do.

"Are you a free spender?" she quizzed mercilessly.

"I never condescend to penuriousness."

"Are you impecunious?"

"Well, I'm not indigent."

"I suppose you are very religious?"

"Well, I'm not sanctified, neither am I impious."

Perplexed at his attitude, Edna tipped her chin upward, chuckled and exhaled little curls of smoke from her cigarette.

Throughout this whole absurd conversation, Edna noted that his vocabulary was equal to her own, even superior, and realized that the farther she went in what she thought were interrogations that would floor him, the more puzzling he became.

"I imagine, Mr. Coleman," she said, "that you are something like a man I know in Boston. He carried a Bible around with him and slept with it under his pillow. But when away from his flock, Oh boy! how he could put away a quart of old Bourbon and never feel it!"

"Well, you never can tell what a fellow will do away from home," Coleman remarked with an enigmatic smile and gesture, designed to leave her puzzled again.

"The Bible is a joke, I think," she declared.

"Don't you believe in it?"

"You mean Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee, healing the blind, and other such circus stunts? No! I should say not!"

"Why do you disbelieve it?"

"Oh!" she said, lighting another cigarette—it was the fifth since they had been seated at the table—"My feeling about the Bible is like yours about prohibition—not interested." There was insolence in her voice, amusing to Coleman.

Then she talked of clothes, money, New York, society, Europe, the men she had met, a Russian Count who had committed suicide because she had refused to marry him. As they finished their dinner, left the dining-room and found seats on the mezzanine floor, she continued to question him.

"But, Mr. Coleman, in all seriousness, don't you find most people disagreeable, selfish and narrow-minded these days?"

"No, I usually find some good in every one."

"But you have no pleasures," she persisted.

"Oh, yes I have—that's where you are mistaken. I love books, music, and the out-of-doors."

"But why miss so much of life? We are young only once, you know." As in all of her assertions, Edna's manner was emphatic, though the expression on her sophisticated young face indicated that she was frequently perplexed and bored. "When the sun goes down," she continued, "I crave excitement, thrills, and I've got to have them. That's life—joy! I love it."

"Well, I rather enjoy hunting, golf, swimming and reading," Coleman replied, purposely tame.

"But one must have diversion," she insisted. "I'd rot if I had to live as you pretend to live."

"Well, Miss Hatfield, in the first place, I cannot afford

to live in luxury. And again, women don't interest me."

"Ha, ha! You've been in love?"

"No, never."

"Why not? You are young, ambitious, handsome. You certainly are peculiar. I've never met anyone like you before, and, believe me, I've met many men."

"I don't doubt that. Perhaps I'm a misogynist," he smiled.

For a moment the word was not clear to her. Then it dawned upon her—a woman-hater!

"Do you mean to tell me," she asked, "that you have never been in love? That you've never seen a woman you would love to kiss, caress, or even hold her dainty hand?"

"Women don't interest me, and, as a matter of fact, I really haven't time for them. I don't think any woman in the world would ever vitally interest me, except in a business way."

"Then you don't believe in love?"

"I know nothing about it."

Edna chuckled aloud, and blurted out, "A virgin man!"

"I don't claim to be an angel."

"Believe me, old dear, all you lack is wings," she said amusedly, still laughing.

"Perhaps you misunderstand me, Miss Hatfield, I am neither a saint nor an ascetic. I just have my own ideas, that's all."

"Are you kidding me?"

"No, of course not."

"You are a philanthropist, I suppose?"

"Not exactly that," he laughed, "but business problems take most of my time, and I am not a victim of *amorsenilis*."

"About all I can add is that you are a queer bird," she remarked with finality.

Now realizing that he had puzzled her, that she seemed keenly interested in penetrating his thought, and seeing the door of opportunity open, he quickly added, "I have never yet fallen for a woman, and that is really all there is to it, Miss Hatfield."

By the satisfied little smile on Edna's face, it was apparent that she had made a resolution during the conversation, for she assumed a motherly attitude, and said, "Is that right to yourself, Mr. Coleman?"

"No woman can lure me," was the subtle answer.

In that moment Edna Hatfield challenged herself to win this man. He was youthful, athletic, good-looking, he had attractive eyes, well-shaped limbs, a vigorous body. And, strange as it may seem, his clean mind aroused in her a desire to conquer him.

"I'll get him, yes I will! Oh, you won't be so clever after all, Roger Coleman," she thought, as she smiled complacently, then added aloud, "I must say you are quite an unusual, brilliant man, and any woman should be happy with you. You are not only interesting, but you are the type that almost any woman likes."

Coleman only smiled as though embarrassed.

At this moment a bell-boy appeared with a message for her. "Pardon me," she said to Coleman, as she placed a tip on the boy's tray, "I have an appointment. I hope I shall see you tomorrow. Are you returning to Kozart on the noon train?"

"Yes," he admitted.

"Then I shall see you again. Goodbye." She arose and accepted Coleman's hand, which she pressed intimately, leaving but one conclusion to be drawn.

"She wants me. I'll give her the opportunity," he thought, with a quiet smile.

Little did he realize, however, what a trap this vampire would set, nor what trouble was in store by pursuing such a course as he had formulated some weeks before this meeting.

"Don't fall in love with the pretty maid upstairs," was Edna's last admonition. She took the elevator down, and went out the side entrance. Coleman descended the stairs in time to get a glimpse of her as she entered a taxicab occupied by a man, and the two drove away.

CHAPTER XIV

RETURNING to the mezzanine floor, Coleman entered a booth and telephoned to Arthur Davis, his government aid.

Thirty minutes later Davis was in Coleman's room at the hotel. Almost the first thing Davis said was, "Coleman, you are to meet Chief Bearskin tonight."

"Yes, and he's the man I've been thinking of every day since I reached this country. Do you know him?"

"Oh, yes, quite well," Davis replied.

"Does he trust any of the Indian agents?"

"Precious few."

After a brief chat, "By the way, what is the time?" Coleman asked, as he looked at his watch, and noticed the minute-hand had stopped.

"It's ten-thirty, and you are to meet the Chief at eleven. And I think it best that you talk with him alone on your first meeting."

"Better be going, then."

"All right. Goodnight. I'll see you two weeks from today," said Davis, and left the room.

Coleman read his report from Mitchell, then took a taxicab and drove to the south part of the town. He got out of the cab on a corner and asked the driver to return in one hour. Following the instructions from Mitchell, he opened a picket gate that led into a yard, through which he went to the rear of a small cottage, sat down on the steps and pushed an electric button. Presently an Indian

woman in a long dress and soft-soled shoes came, took his hand, ushered him across a lot, over a board fence into another yard, then through the rear of a house, and into the living-room of a home as luxurious as any white man might desire. It was the abode of Chief Bearskin.

Coleman glanced around. The ceiling was curved, the half-circle windows draped with rich rose velour; on the wall hung an antique painting of John Ross, one of the original Indian leaders; standing beside him was Sequoya, who devised the Cherokee alphabet, and Ruth Muskrat, the girl who for years pleaded for the aid of the white man in the progress of the red race. And on the wall, in beautiful frames, were also the portraits of Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and a facsimile of Charles Russell's "The First Furrow," which portrays the passing of the West, the white man's destruction of the great Indian hunting grounds.

In the room were a piano, cases of books, artistic lamps, hand-carved chairs; and on the highly-polished floor lay Indian rugs and pillows blending with the rich colors of hand-made pottery from the Kozart reservation.

Chief Bearskin was standing near the wall with a book in his hand.

"I am Roger Coleman," said his visitor, extending his hand to the Indian Chief.

"Sit down," replied the Chief.

The Indian was over six feet in height, of massive frame, with piercing eyes. And, despite his advanced years, he was even more active than Mitchell had pictured him. As he was leaving within the hour on a lecture tour, he had attired himself in his native regalia. When he stood up, his headgear of eagle feathers hung to the floor. A nickel band protruded from beneath his

chin, and a long strand of costly beads hung around his neck. On his wrists were hammered-silver bracelets, and on his fingers several jade rings. He wore a buckskin suit that was covered with many medals, a Shrine pin, and other emblems. Along the seams of his coat and trousers, leather tassels dangled from solid circles of colored beads.

"Do you live here?" said Coleman.

"No," replied the Chief.

"Get your mail here?"

"No."

"Come here in the daytime?"

"No."

"Are you staying all night here?"

These questions served as the proper code of introduction; had Coleman made a single mistake, Chief Bearskin might have hesitated to answer freely the many interrogations which followed.

Then, in further confirmation of his identity, Coleman opened his shirt and revealed the Osage brand over his heart, which the eyes of the Indian met with a smile, and he declared, "You need not show me the other marks. I understand."

It required only a moment for Coleman to perceive the distinguished traits of the Indian. Old and ugly? Not at all! His flow of language, his poise, quality of thought and majestic dignity were impressive, and in his presence one forgot everything but to stare at and listen to him.

"Were you in Kozart before statehood?"

"Yes, brother. Kozart was a peaceful nation then for the Kozarts. But when men like Hatfield came, they began to rob, murder, cheat, deceive and poison our people—body and mind. Yet the Indians were accused of the crimes."

"Have you lived in Opatonga many years?"

"Yes, brother. My people were born here, brought up here. Opatonga is the only home they have ever known. But I want to help the Kozart country. They need the white man's help. Jake Hatfield has promised them many things, and none of his promises have ever been kept. Each treaty he has made was worse than the one before. Each year the condition gets worse."

"Yes, Chief," said Coleman sympathetically, "I realize the Indians have had a battle for over a hundred years. To me it seems that many people think only of the almighty dollar these days, and never realize nor care anything about the struggle of the men responsible for our present civilization."

Chief Bearskin stiffened, but with no resentment apparent in speech, he told in a few words the feeling within him.

"No," he said, "the Kozarts have toiled, struggled, striven, and tried to live in peace. But by the time they became settled, happy, and were enjoying their homes, commercial progress forced them into the newer fields. When the red men came to the Kozart Nation, it was a happy hunting ground for them; they were peaceful, and bothered no one. The land given to the Kozarts, Hatfield took away from them, and they were put back on the hillside, where corn, beans, potatoes, or any kind of seed would hardly grow. Then when oil was discovered, our tribes were beaten out of their land; and when oil royalties were promised them, all they received was the promises, for Hatfield deceived and defrauded them. Yet God only knows why he had such power over them."

"Do you hold any resentment against the government?"

"No," the Chief replied. "Indians hate no one."

'United we stand, divided we fall.' The Indians of today are not like the Indians of yesterday. We want to become educated; we want to live as the white man lives. But what chance have we unless we have the right kind of honest help?"

"None," Coleman agreed.

"Do you know that the land of a dead man in the Kozart country can be sold by Jake Hatfield without any consent of—or even an interview with—the heirs? And that the heirs are not allowed to engage an attorney or offer any resistance to these inhuman acts?"

Coleman shook his head.

"The Kozarts are going hungry, and Hatfield is living off the fat of the land. Two hundred thousand of our people lived in the Far West in the late eighties; we made the first path through the wilderness. But only twenty thousand are there today, and many of them are in the last stages of starvation."

Coleman had sat like a statue, not missing a word from the educated warrior's lips. Then he took up his questioning once more.

"Why do chiefs wear feathers, beads and bracelets, and so many medals?"

"They mean honor, power, authority," Bearskin replied.

"Why so many colors?"

"They are tribal colors."

"What does the red mean?"

"Red means Shu-ja—sometimes war."

"What do yellow, blue and white represent?"

"Sk-a is yellow—it means forsaken. To-ha is blue, and means purity. White is ska—it means real."

"What do all the little beads on your vest denote?"

"Emblems of American Indian jewels."

"Where do you get them?"

"Indians make our beads and jewels."

"Do all Indians wear eagle feathers?"

"No, only real Indians do. But many of these red men in Kozart are half-breeds, and they wear turkey feathers or the tails of prairie chickens to make white men think they are real Indians."

"What is a medicine man?"

"Wa-ken-da-ga! He looks after the sick and the weak. He knows roots, oils and herbs."

"Do Indians frequently get sick?"

"Seldom."

"Why not?"

"Because God put herbs and roots in the ground, and God put mind in man to know these things about Nature."

"What if the medicine man fails to cure the sick?"

"In olden times if he failed three times, he was sent to the Happy Hunting Grounds without ceremony."

"Why was that?"

"Because Indians knew certain herbs and roots will cure any disease, and it was the medicine man's fault if the sick didn't recover."

"What did an Indian do if bitten by a snake?"

"He chewed up herbs, swallowed the juice and smeared some of it on the bite, and the poison left."

"I never heard of that before."

"It is not strange at all. Rattlesnakes live only where the herbs grow, so that if they are injured they can eat some of the herbs and cure themselves."

"Is it true that an Indian cannot be lost in the woods?"

"Indians always know their way."

"What do they do if lost in the darkness?"

"They know direction by the moon and the stars."

"Suppose it were cloudy?"

"They bend down and feel the grass."

"What for?"

"The blades always bend eastward after dark."

"What if lost in the mountains?"

"Feel the bark of the trees."

"What good would that do?"

"The smooth part is always on the north side."

"Why do Indians prefer to live in the woods?"

"They do not prefer it, they have been forced to live that way."

"I know, Chief, but the Indians would not be happy in cities and in fine homes."

"You guarantee they would! We have full-blooded Indians in this state who are bankers, senators and congressmen."

"I don't want to burden you with so many questions, Chief Bearskin, but I want to familiarize myself with the Kozart ways, signs, traits, faults, and then at the proper time I will use my knowledge to their advantage."

"I am willing to aid you."

"Why did the Indians in Opatonga create warfare?"

"People lied to them, accused them of crimes, and they were forced to fight to protect their homes."

"What keeps the Indian race down?"

"Grafters, of course. Everything Hatfield has today he took from the Indians."

"But if business men had not come to this state, the Indians would still be living in a primitive way."

The Chief drew himself erect, and said, "No, as the business man progressed, so would the Indian if only he had a home and had been given a chance to improve."

"But some of them are still primitive."

"So are some white men," the Chief said abruptly. "I can show you grown white men and women in America

who can't even read or write, don't want to learn, and are more ignorant than any Indian ever was."

"I must admit you are right, Chief."

"Some people expect an Indian to come from a primitive state and be made over in a day," the Chief added.

"Have you ever met Jake Hatfield?"

"Yes."

"You know Hood and Blackburn?"

"Yes, all of them," said the Chief. Then he added unexpectedly, "If you win Hatfield's daughter, you win the fight."

Coleman had been amazed at the Chief, particularly at the infrequent use of blunt or ordinary Indian words during the conversation, and the meeting was a happy surprise. Then, remembering the taxicab was to call for him at an appointed time, Coleman arose. "This has been the most interesting and pleasant meeting of my life," he said.

"When shall I see you again?" asked the Chief.

"Two weeks from today."

"All right, my brother."

Coleman departed and returned to the hotel downtown.

CHAPTER XV

THE following morning Edna arrived at the station in advance of Coleman, who, upon approaching the Pullman steps, glanced up and at once caught sight of her waving a welcome from within the coach, inviting him to sit with her. After entering the car and seating himself beside her he saw a copy of the Kozart *Herald* of Saturday's issue spread open upon her lap, bearing a glaring headline, and quickly his keen eye took in the paragraph beneath it.

"Repeal the Volstead Act," it read.

"Enforcing the prohibition laws has cost the government one hundred million dollars; over one hundred prohibition officers have been killed, two thousand injured, and five thousand blinded by jealous rivals. It is time the country wakes up and repeals the dastardly Act. Kozart Welfare Committee."

Edna excused herself to enter the dressing-room, leaving Coleman with opportunity to reflect on the article. "'Kozart Welfare Committee.' Hatfield, of course," he thought. He knew that Hatfield owned the *Herald*, and since the Indian country was already a prohibition state, such an article could only aid them in a national way. Moreover, many intelligent white people were populating the Kozart country since the great oil strike, and this article was proof that Hatfield felt his political power on the wane.

At that moment Coleman realized that he must battle with Hatfield's daily paper from now on; therefore his

own work must proceed more forcibly and vigilantly than ever.

Folding the paper, he laid it down, and when Edna returned to her seat he gave no indication of having read the item. Instead of the remark she fully supposed would come, he only smiled and adjusted the window shade so that the light would not shine in her eyes. However, Coleman was thinking deeply of the perplexing problem he was facing. Could he use this woman as a ruse? Escape detection? "It is a dangerous experiment," he thought. Would he be able to pursue a course which would convict her father?

He realized that she felt a physical attraction for him even now. Would feigned wooing and pursuit lead to embarrassment and ultimate disaster? He had expressed himself perspicuously concerning all women, and she had taken it in. Then, too, from remembrance of all that he had heard about Edna Hatfield making fools out of men, later scornfully laughing at them and boasting about it, he knew she would freely and eagerly take advantage of the slightest advance on his part, and deep in his heart he hoped she would.

One thought followed another. Had her father become suspicious of him and sent her to Opatonga City to watch him? Had they planned to do to him as they had to Gordon Haines, and many others? "Perhaps that is the motive," he concluded.

While Coleman sat pondering over the plans he had formed, Edna was likewise conjuring as to what method she might adopt to win him, then contemptuously cast him aside as she had many others. For one thing she knew—he was unusually handsome, well dressed, and not only desired and pursued by all of the young set in Kozart, but at clubs, in hotels, and on the streets she had overheard

women speak admiringly of him. Many of them, too, freely discussed the fact that Coleman was unresponsive to their overtures. "Unusual man!" she thought. But from his conduct, no doubt, the rumors were true. When he danced with those scantily and diaphanously clad, she had noticed he handled them carefully and distantly. There was never any attitude of familiarity.

She recalled someone saying he was psychic and a student of mental telepathy. After a short period of silence on the part of each, Edna broke the spell with the remark, "Someone told me that you tell fortunes," and she looked at him expectantly.

"I!" he exclaimed, apparently surprised.

"Is it true?"

"I'm not a clairvoyant."

"But you do read palms, don't you, Mr. Coleman?"

"Oh, sometimes."

"Will you read mine?"

"It's only a joke, Miss Edna. I can't tell fortunes."

"But Mrs. Blackburn said you were very good."

Coleman laughed heartily, as though the idea were highly amusing.

"Won't you read my hand?"

"I might some time."

"Right now," she said, pressing closely to him and extending her hand.

"Not on the train, Miss Hatfield. It's too public."

"Then will you come to my home tonight?"

"Do you really want me to?"

"Surely!" she returned. "I think you are so interesting."

Coleman sat thinking to himself, "Now, is this a good plan? Am I doing the right thing? Maybe it's a ruse on her part. No, it can't be that, for I don't believe anyone

suspects me. Well, I have but one life. I'm here to do my duty, and something tells me to use her as a tool. Yes, I'll go," he concluded.

"If beauty alone counted, I'd be in love with her," he thought. Instantly something else whirled through his mind. "Now, wait a moment. Don't be too impulsive," he warned himself. "Gordon Haines once wrote me about some dashing she-devil—it's Edna Hatfield, I'll bet my hat! But if I can win her, that's the thing!" Then too, Chief Bearskin had said, "Win Hatfield's daughter, and you win the fight."

Presently Edna spoke. "You didn't answer me," she reminded him.

"You really want me to come out tonight?"

"Yes, you interest me, and I want you to read my hand."

"Thank you. I'll come," he replied.

When the train arrived at Kozart, Edna's car was at the curb. Looking up at Coleman invitingly, she said, "Jump in. I'll drive you home."

Whirling up to the City Drug Store, Edna said, "Wait a minute. I want some kodak films. I'll be right back." As she leaped from the car and entered the store, a news-boy passed, and Coleman bought a *Herald* just off the press, on the front page of which he noticed another startling article on prohibition.

"The Joke," it read. "The Volstead Act today is the laughing stock of the Nation. So long as the world exists people will continue to drink when they want to. Vote-as-you-drink and drink-as-you-vote. Times have changed. Believe in personal liberty. If you want a drink, take it—that's your own business and your right. Use it! Kozart Welfare Committee."

As Coleman finished reading the article, Edna reap-

peared and entered the car. At that moment, a shot rang out.

"Who'n 'ell sez I kain't shute?" came a voice from across the street, instantly followed by two more shots, which shattered the globe of a street light.

"What's that?" asked Coleman.

"It's Luke Berry on a drunken spree," replied Edna calmly.

Men were darting behind posts or into buildings, but neither the gunfire nor Berry's crazed condition disturbed her composure as she pulled the clutch of the machine and drove swiftly away.

As Coleman glanced back, he shuddered in resentment when Tom Blackburn walked over and kicked an old squaw off the curb, then spat liquor in her daughter's face because she refused to kiss him. The incident apparently made no impression on Edna, but Coleman could not refrain from exclaiming indignantly, "That's inhuman! Those two people were harming no one!"

"Oh, you have to treat them that way to make them like you," she returned abruptly.

"Do you really believe that?" Coleman asked with feeling.

"Certainly," she shot back. "Indians are unfit for white people to associate with."

"What made them that way?" Coleman quizzed.

"That's the only life they know."

"Right you are, Miss Hatfield. But they never had a chance."

"They don't deserve a chance," she said bitterly.

"And why not?"

"Because they are filthy, and smell worse than rats."

"Did you ever stop to think that the American people sympathize with far-away Russians, send thousands of

dollars to Armenia and aid other parts of Europe where we have never had any contact that caused their destitute condition, yet right here in our own country we allow the true American Indian to be humiliated, ignored, and finally die for want of aid or food."

"Do you call an Indian an American?"

"I certainly do," he answered.

Edna laughed aloud.

"Don't you?" Coleman asked.

"I should say not," she replied with a toss of her head.

Coleman wisely changed the conversation as Edna raced out Broadway to the Kozart Apartments in which he lived.

By a curious coincidence, as he stepped from the car Wathena Berry and her mother, out for a walk, passed on the opposite side of the street.

"That's Luke's daughter," Edna said.

"Yes, so I understand," Coleman replied. And he glanced over, and raised his hat in salutation to Wathena's shy bow of recognition.

"Oh, you know her, do you?"

"I have met her."

"Do you think she's pretty?"

"Well, she is very sweet looking."

"Pretty face, but that's all. It's too bad the way she's talked about in Kozart," Edna answered, with thinly-veiled satisfaction.

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you know about the family?"

Coleman shook his head.

"Luke Berry is not her real father."

"What!" exclaimed Coleman.

"I thought everybody in town knew that."

"Well, I know her very slightly," Coleman evaded.

But his eye followed Wathena as she strolled down the sidewalk, tenderly aiding her mother.

As Coleman thanked Edna for driving him home, she said coquettishly, "Tonight—don't forget. It must be a good fortune." And she dashed away, with the racy exhaust pipe wide open on her new red roadster, her father's latest present to her.

Roger's actions, however, belied his words. He stood for a moment on the sidewalk, and saw Wathena turn her head and look back. His memory quickly flashed to the first time he had met her, and how sweet she looked as she shyly acknowledged the awkward introduction by her father—so dainty, so fair she had seemed to him. He could not but feel a sort of contempt for Edna, whose home was the most pretentious in all the state, on its ten-acre tract, tricked out with statues, shrubbery, marble balustrades, a sunken pool, gazing globes and various ornamentations, while in direct contrast was Wathena's three-room cottage surrounded only by a picket fence, a few postoak trees and honeysuckle vines. Some hitherto unknown voice seemed to be calling to Coleman that he compare the souls and hearts of these two women. He felt that his own life and theirs were approaching an important point.

While Wathena was out walking with her mother, seeing that she had fresh air, Edna went home and called for her maid, Cinders.

Cinders was tiny and amusing. The whites of her eyes were as large as her nose, her coal-black face as round as a ball, her mouth wide and large, her teeth snow-white. And she moved around the room like a frightened cat.

For two hours Edna remained in her boudoir, and when she emerged, was dressed in a perfectly fitting crimson gown, which added charm to her sparkling ebony eyes

and confident smile. For a long while she studied herself in the bevelled door mirror, and she whispered, "Edna, you are beautiful;—Edna, you are the queen of the state, you can get any man you want. Take him. Life is short. Enjoy yourself, girl. You cannot be youthful and beautiful all your life. Coleman is untouched. It would be wonderful to be the first woman to touch those lips, and—"

"Listen, Cinders," she said, as the fuzzy-headed maid entered the room in response to Edna's ring.

"Yass'm."

"I am to have a caller this evening, and after his arrival, I must not be disturbed."

"Yass'm, Madam."

"By anyone, you understand."

"Yass'm, noboddie."

"Hand me the yellow scarf, Cinders."

"Yass'm, Madam. You shu' does look purty, Mis' Hatfield."

"Think so, Cinders?" Edna purred, pirouetting and gazing into the mirror before her.

"Yass'm you shu' does!"

"Don't forget, Cinders,—no one to see me tonight after this gentleman arrives, and no phone calls."

"An' Ah ain't to ansah dem?"

"No, stuff the telephone bell."

"So's 'twon't rattle?"

"Yes, Cinders, do it now."

Presently the front door bell rang, and Cinders ushered Coleman in.

As he sat waiting, he recalled the wild and varied stories he had heard about Edna—her jewels, her adventures, her lovers, her tantrums. Many times he had watched her graceful figure, and had been fascinated by

her swift glide, and was forced to admit she had qualities that lured and swayed the attention of men. While he was lost in his thoughts, Edna descended the broad stairway and entered the room. As he arose, she extended her hand. The moment he touched her skin it seemed to impart a vitalizing, feverish tingle, a new kind of life and vigor which he had never before felt.

"I am so glad to see you," she said, as she held his hand tightly.

"And I feel honored," he tactfully replied.

"I'm just wild to learn what my hand reveals!"

"It's an interesting one," he observed, studying her palm.

"It must be delightful to be able to read palms. Won't you teach me how?"

"Oh, I am only an amateur," he laughed.

"Well, I hear you are a marvel, and I want to know everything about myself—who loves me, and who would have me, and—Oh, you know."

"And how many children?" Coleman chuckled.

"Don't want any!" she exclaimed.

"What! Don't you like children?"

"No, I can't endure crying kids."

"Well, let me see," he said. "You have an interesting hand—an unusual one—artistic, lucky, brilliant, beautiful since childhood, and—"

"Yes! Do go on!" she exclaimed.

"Well, as you know, Miss Hatfield, there are seven types of hands. You have a spatulate-pointed hand—it is a good type. The palm is broad, fingers long. I see great wealth ahead—travel, meeting with famous men, an evening with the Prince of Wales, many offers of marriage. You will decline them all." Coleman told her a beautiful story.

"Tell me some more," she insisted.

"No, that's all tonight."

"Oh, I think you are a darling!"

"I don't seem to collect my thoughts tonight, but some other time I will read your future in detail—provided," he said, "you keep it a secret."

"Why, most assuredly—if you ask it."

Coleman paused a moment, bowed his head; then said subtly, "Do you know, Miss Hatfield, I seem suddenly to have been thrilled by you. I must be going. You are too attractive for me."

"Oh, don't say that—and just call me Edna. I feel as if I had known you all my life. Tell me some more," she persisted, as she pressed closely, slid her arm through his, and plainly showed her exuberance.

"No, I can't—it involves too much."

"But why not?"

"Well, I don't think you would ever care for me. And besides—"

"Oh, please tell me!"

"No, that's all now," he said. And, to her surprise, he remained but a short time longer. For she was so frankly eager to be taken into his arms and to yield herself to his caresses, that his resistance piqued her vanity still further, and Coleman started to his apartments fully cognizant of what to expect if he called on her many times.

CHAPTER XVI

SOON the blustery winter season slipped away, marked by a calendar of various events. The most noteworthy to Coleman had been his meeting with Chief Bearskin and his acquaintance with Wathena Berry.

He met Edna Hatfield downtown often, and several times she drove him to her home in the late afternoon and invited him to stay to dinner; but he always was careful to accept only when he knew other guests would be present. He counted his introduction to the society group of which she was the leader as an important event, and, while not at all to his liking were the gay parties he attended, yet by them he had been afforded a certain amount of amusement, to say nothing of the opportunity of observing the actions of various men to whom he was vitally interested, as possible assets in aiding him in his relentless investigation.

Coleman now likened Edna Hatfield to a beautiful butterfly, freely flitting from rose to rose, lily to lily, sipping the sweet nectar. Men in her life had been like the roses in the garden—once desired, but soon discarded and forgotten.

As for Wathena, Roger found her sweet, innocent, possessed of a genuine, charming manner, naturally kind, talented in music, and so devoted to her mother that he had learned to love her; not for material riches, for she had none; not for culture, for lack of opportunity had prevented the development of her talents. But somehow

she was different—so very different—from any girl he had ever known, and her nature so refined and unselfish that he loved her for what she was—sweet, unspoiled, and pure of soul. And as he found his mind daily filled with radiant thoughts of her, he began to pity her father instead of criticizing him. It was plain, as he saw it now, that Luke Berry was entirely ignorant, a pathetic catspaw in Hatfield's hands.

Many of the Kozart people despised and disapproved of Edna Hatfield, but this did not disturb her in the least, for she had adulation, flattery, passionate love-letters, orchids, roses and invitations to parties sufficient to turn her head. Unpleasant remarks concerning herself that reached her ears she attributed to envy or jealousy on the part of those who attempted, as she saw it, to slander her.

So clever was Coleman's investigation in carrying on his secret work, and so renumeration had been his investments in oil leases that without effort he was fast becoming an independent operator. And while he thought much of Wathena, he also thought much of Edna—though of course in a different way.

One day Hatfield sent Luke Berry to bring Coleman to the bank.

"Gotta 'rest ye," Luke announced as he entered Coleman's office.

"Do you mean it?" Coleman asked.

"Yep, 'at's whut I sed."

For a moment Coleman's heart jumped, and his nerves tingled, though he arose to his feet and asked, "What's the joke, Luke?" all the while wondering, "Has my time come?"

"Wal, Jake wants 'er see ye."

Despite the serious thought of what Hatfield perhaps wanted, Coleman seized the moment as a propitious one

in which to jest with Luke. So, as he closed his desk and started from his office with Berry, he asked humorously:

"Luke, have you ever had the measles?"

"Yes, had 'em in Kentucky."

"Ever have the small-pox?"

"Naw!"

"Ever have the whooping-cough?"

"Sho' tootin'."

"Ever have a bad attack of ancestors?"

"Naw, I hain't nebber 'ad 'at deezeeze."

"You're all right, Sheriff," Coleman answered him laughingly, as they entered the bank.

Bob Blackburn and Silas Hood were standing at Hatfield's desk. The moment was tense to Coleman, for, though he hardly believed he would be shot down in the bank, yet it was a curious sensation he felt at having been called there by Hatfield; he thought of course he was to be accused of some crime or ordered out of town. But instead he received a surprise, for as he neared the president's desk, Hatfield extended his hand and said, "Coleman, you're lucky, and a likeable chap. You've made friends here—you're on the square. And I want you to take the vice-presidency of this bank."

The offer came so suddenly, Coleman's throat choked for a moment, but, as though not in the least surprised, he answered:

"Well, you flatter me, Mr. Hatfield. But I'm not a banker."

"But I've had my eye on you for months, and Blackburn and Hood both agree that we need just such a man as you in this bank. Your connections here would not keep you from carrying on your own business, and such affiliations would be an asset to you."

"Well, what do you think of that!" Coleman said to

himself. "They are actually trying to get me into the bank to become one of the indirect killers!" Aloud he replied, "Really, this is a pleasant surprise, Jake, and I thank you, but indoor work would kill me, and I couldn't consider the position for a minute."

"Name your own price," said Hatfield, rearing back in his swivel chair and puffing a long cigar.

"It isn't a question of price, Jake. It is simply because my health would not permit my being confined."

"Twenty-five thousand a year, and take a vacation when you want it. How's that? Think it over, and give me an answer Monday," Hatfield said with apparent candor.

"All right, I'll think it over. And I thank you," Coleman replied, "but I feel sure I shall have to decline your generous offer."

After discussing the condition of the oil fields for some minutes, he returned to his office somewhat amused, giving no consideration, of course, to the connection Hatfield had suggested.

Monday morning Coleman went to the bank, thanked Hatfield, and, to the banker's great surprise, declined the offer, under pretense that his own business and health were more important to him.

The following night, when a glorious silvery moon had made its majestic rise over the metropolis, and the pay-day crowd filled the sidewalks, an eccentric stranger suddenly appeared among the men. He was tall and thin, wore a heavy beard, horn-rimmed glasses, a black slouch hat, tight-fitting trousers, green shirt, a long black coat, and his shoes seemed at least three sizes too large.

Mounting a wooden soap-box in front of the Hatfield Bank, he declaimed:

"It was in the fifteenth century that representatives of

one race came to the coast of Florida, enslaved and antagonized the Kozarts; it was De Soto and his band of men who burned down the village of Mavilla; and it was in the beautiful month of May when they found the mighty Father of Waters and forced the redskins into warfare to protect their homes. In later years another race, disguised as friends, visited the South Atlantic coast, pretending to exchange in an honorable way their wares for furs and pearls. But the havoc they wrought left a bitter memory among the tribes, for they killed them without mercy, and went on their way. Next came a third selfish race, who by force took the land that the Kozarts rightfully owned, so that they were cruelly forced to abandon their homes and go farther westward into lands untraversed by man."

A big crowd had gathered, at first amused.

"Two centuries later," the speaker went on, "despite the fact that some of the tribes even adopted a constitution like our own the land-hungry men forced the Kozarts out of their homes again."

Some of the crowd hissed.

"Hey, mister, how cold is it up there?" asked a little fat-faced newsboy, as he gazed up at the angular frame of the speaker.

"The woods for you!" shouted a roughneck.

Undisturbed by their jests, the mysterious stranger continued: "The treaty of New Echota has never been lived up to. By it the Kozarts were promised homes of their own. They were to be protected always, and never molested by any other race. But in the early nineties, fifty thousand Kozarts were being slowly crowded out by three hundred thousand greedy men, who had no right by law to be here."

"Who is that nut?" asked Hood.

"Escaped lunatic," Tom Blackburn remarked.

But, with upstretched hands and a voice that could be heard a block away, the tall, homely stranger proclaimed:

"Trachoma and tuberculosis were almost unknown among the Kozarts before grafters forced them to live on land where no other race could exist." And then he shouted, "When a good plan to aid the red man comes up before Congress and is accepted by it, it is usually rejected by some deceptive body of men whose god is gold."

For as long as thirty minutes he made an impassioned speech. Then he stepped down from the box, picked it up, carried it away with him, and disappeared.

Everyone wondered who he was. The Hatfield group only jeered. The next night at the same hour and at the same place this stranger again appeared. "People don't realize," he said, "what prohibition means to all America. But prohibition has come to stay. 'Down with law!' some men shout. 'Down with any kind of law!' others shout. But no sane man, no man with a wife and children whom he dearly loves is going to bring whiskey back. You in Kozart know that the prohibition amendment was written into the Constitution when this Indian country was made into a state. And yet some of you men before me, whose greedy lust for the almighty dollar fills your minds with poison and deceit are not satisfied with robbing the people of their lands, but you want to fill the ignorant red men with killing drugs that you know will soon whirl them into eternity."

He again made a thirty-minute talk, and again disappeared.

The man was a master of words, eloquent of gesture, and painted graphic pictures of squalor and tragedy that made the people gasp. His actions were almost phantom-like, for each day for a week, at the same time and place,

he reappeared and then modestly departed. And no one knew who he was, nor where his lodging place. He never smiled, he did not ask questions, nor answer the many flung at him by the curious audience.

"I believe he's a government dog," said Tom Blackburn on the second Saturday night the man appeared.

"Ah, he's only some freak, nutty on prohibition," said Hood scornfully.

"But where in hell did he come from, and where does he sleep?" questioned Blackburn.

"Search me." Hood replied.

"Don't you think he's just a fanatic?" suggested Hatfield.

"Not on your life! That bird's a government dog," declared Blackburn.

"If Tom's hunch is right, we'd better give him the K. K. letter," put in Claud Hood.

"Why not bump him off?" suggested Blackburn.

"No boys, let's not do that. Conditions are not as they were a few years ago. We are in power, and if we expect to remain in power, we must kill fewer people," was the advice of Al Dawson, who was always the balance-wheel of the sinister group.

"What do you think, Massey?" asked Blackburn.

"He's a bad egg."

"Well, what do you say, Jake?"

"Dead fools and dead Kozarts tell no tales," Hatfield replied, winking at Blackburn, who was the chief killer of the Hatfield faction. The group then dispersed, and went to their respective homes.

That night the stranger failed to appear. A week elapsed, and he did not return.

About a month after the tall stranger disappeared, the citizens of Kozart were startled one night by the roaring noise of a speeding airplane flying low over the city. As

it passed over the business section, someone in the pilot-box dropped sheets of paper to the streets below. The machine circled and continued on its way, and copies of a two-page newspaper, which littered the streets, were soon being read by people in stores, bars, homes, under street lights on the sidewalks. It was called "*Air Mail News*," and on the front page was an opening shot on prohibition.

"Kozart, Wake Up," the article was headed. "Do you endorse the wave of crime and disrespect of the law engulfing this part of Kozart? Do you believe the people should be despoiled of their lands, and their race be made to vanish from the face of the earth? A new prosecuting attorney is to be elected in Kozart, and justice to the Indians is in the making. Watch for the *News* every day. (Editor, *Air Mail News*.)"

The better class of citizens talked in whispers, while the Hatfield group mocked at what they termed cowardice of men seeking to establish themselves in the hearts of the Indians. And, when Hatfield himself was shown the paper, he merely remarked, "Hell! There are more fools in Kozart than mosquitoes in a swamp!"

Late the following afternoon, the plane again appeared in the sky over the city, and the streets were strewn with a second edition of the *Air Mail News*. Its front-page article set five thousand tongues wagging.

"Vote to Save Your Home!" the article read. "I love the red man, I love his honor, I love his kind of friendship, I love his noble deeds, his bravery,—I love him because all the money in the world will not tempt him to betray a friend of his tribes. Editor, *Air Mail News*.)"

Whence the airplanes came and where they went, no one knew. But this second article in the *Air Mail News* caused a stir in the Hatfield ranks. And when Hatfield's paper, the *Kozart Herald*, replied to the mysterious ed-

itor in its morning edition, people wondered where the battle would end.

"Informers are Crime-makers," the article was headed. "Can we blame a young man who grows up with a confused mind regarding the law?—a law he knows to be a sham and a lie, broken daily everywhere, and by despicable enforcement officers who lie, cheat and steal? Beware of cowards, informers and prohibition fanatics! Tate Wheeler, Editor,—Kozart *Herald*."

Following this article in Hatfield's paper, the sidewalks and streets were lined with people in the late afternoon, watching for the mysterious plane that had heretofore appeared regularly at about four o'clock. And presently the fast-moving machine plied through the air, sailed over the town, circled a few times and dropped papers, then flew away. In this edition was printed:

"Elect the Right Man! So long as you continue to elect governors, legislators, judges and prosecuting attorneys who swear to uphold the law and protect you, but who swindle you the moment they are in office, who control every move you make and rob the Indian of every dollar he has, hell is just around the corner.—Editor, *Air Mail News*."

The next morning, the *Kozart Herald*, in big type shot back with burning sarcasm a challenge to come out and fight in the open.

"Fools of the Air! Crooked prohibition officers in America are as plentiful as Alabama coons. Only cowardly informers fight in disguise.—Tate Wheeler, Editor."

And while the *Kozart Herald* and the strange editor of the air were fighting back at each other through their respective papers, Roger Coleman again rushed to Opatonga City and called on Chief Bearskin.

"Do you know anything about the man who is publishing the *Air Mail News*?" he queried in a puzzled voice.

"Yes."

"Who is he, and what is his plan?"

"He is out to win the heart and soul of every Kozart in the state," Bearskin replied. "He is going to announce his candidacy for prosecuting attorney, and a week before election he is going to take the test of an Indian Chief."

"What is the test?"

"There are three of them."

"What are they?"

"First, the participant must take a knife and cut the flesh from beneath the muscle in his wrist, throw a rope underneath the muscle of each arm, and be swung to a tree. He dangles in the air a full minute, and if he shows no signs of grief or pain he has passed the first degree."

"Good heavens! And does he live?" exclaimed Coleman.

"Oh, he lives all right. That is only the first test."

"What is the second?"

"It is the fire test."

"What do you mean by that?"

"After the muscles of the wrist are healed, a ditch is dug, three feet wide, three feet deep and thirty feet long. He packs the bottom and sides with clay, then stamps it down and stacks it full of hard dried limbs, and for four days and nights a fire burns continuously in the trench. Then the ashes and coals are brushed out, and without shoes or socks, he must race through this ditch without a sign of pain or grief."

"You mean he runs barefoot through this hot floor of clay?"

"Yes."

"I should think it would kill him!"

"It is only the second degree of courage, brother. Every Indian Chief does it, and feels proud of it."

"Don't his feet burn?"

"Of course they do. But what is pain compared to becoming an Indian Chief?"

"How does he heal the burns?"

"We have oil, made from herbs and roots. This is put on the bottom of his feet, and in six days his feet are well."

"Then he is Chief?"

"No, he must go through a third test."

"What is that?"

"If he can take the first two tests he is sent into the mountains, where he must live on bread and water for one month. Then, in his own way, he must catch an eagle and bring it into the camp alive."

"Are there any eagles in this country?"

"No, there are no eagles out here. But the editor of the *Air Mail News* needs only to take the fire test, to prove his bravery. I am going to aid him in this by announcing an Indian celebration, and offer a touring car to the winner who has performed the most heroic deed of the day. And the man who can pass the test can win every Indian vote in the State."

"Then, if the time should ever come to prove my friendship to you, to the Kozarts, and to other people who believe in justice, if I am allowed such a privilege I will take the test, too," declared Coleman.

He then bade the Chief goodnight, and boarded the midnight train en route to Kozart.

On his way to the office the next morning, Coleman bought a copy of the *Kozart Herald*, and read with contempt that in the effort to bring the strange air pilot to the ground the skies had been filled with a fusillade of machine-gun bullets the previous evening.

"Kozart seems to be the central point for fools," remarked Tom Blackburn as he and Coleman met.

"How's that?" asked Coleman, appearing unconcerned.

"Haven't you heard about the *Air Mail* editor?"

"Oh yes, but I pay little attention to people operating and dominating others in disguise," Coleman replied subtly.

"Some gink bombarded him yesterday. Understand he fell in the ghost farm," Blackburn informed Coleman, eyeing him carefully.

"More mystery for the ghost farm, eh?" Coleman said lightly, showing no outward expression of the emotions piercing his heart.

"Ever been there?"

"Must be a spooky place," replied Coleman, evading a direct answer.

"Why don't you go out there some night?"

"What is the best time to go?" Coleman asked.

"Saturday."

"Don't you think it's some half-wit, Tom, who's having fun out of the people?"

"No, the thicket is a hell of a place. That's where Crazy Snake used to hang out."

"Crazy Snake—who's he?" Coleman asked, as though he had never heard the name.

"He was the wildest man in the Nation years ago. He killed twenty men one day while they were all shooting at him at close range."

B-u-z-z! H-u-m-m! suddenly came the roar of an airplane, and Coleman and Blackburn stiffened to attention, craned their necks, and began searching the air. Instantly from above came fluttering to the tops of houses and trees, landing in the streets and on the tops of automobiles, the *Air Mail News*.

Coleman's heart leaped to his throat for joy. From

what Blackburn had just said, he feared the editor had been killed; but from the hum of the airplane and the appearance of the *News*, he could only feel sure that Chief Bearskin's friend was still alive. Yet no emotion must be shown. "Well, what do you think about that crazy man and his plane?" Coleman asked equivocally.

"He's a plumb flyin' fool. But some bird'll get him yet," said Blackburn, as Hatfield drew up in his car and entered his bank, where Claud and Luke were watching the airplane.

Observing the trio, Coleman stalked into the bank, and Hood immediately asked:

"What's your opinion of this Air Mail fool?"

"I have no opinion," was the laconic answer.

"What do you think about this prohibition talk?"

"Doesn't interest me. I don't drink."

"Well, I tell you, Coleman," came Hatfield's declaration. "People are going to buy whiskey, no matter what the government does. This country has tried out prohibition for four years, and conditions are getting worse every day. The government is losing millions of dollars in taxes; prohibition is making boot-leggers and hijackers out of good citizens, and these informers are the crookedest men of all."

"I suppose you're right," Coleman replied.

"Don't the fool officers know it is a physical impossibility to enforce a dry law in this country?" Hatfield said, straining his voice, and looking intently at Coleman.

"Why ask me?" returned Coleman.

"Well, you're a young man and will be here after we're gone."

"But, you see, I don't drink, Jake."

"You pay taxes, don't you?"

"Yes," shaking his head, "but I don't mix in politics. So long, fellows." And he walked away.

"Damned if I can see through that bird!" said Claud Hood. "Sometimes I think he's a government dog."

"That's what Blackburn thinks," Hatfield remarked. "But didn't Luke and Al Dawson go through his desk one night?" he asked, as he turned to Luke Berry.

"Sho' tootin'," Berry affirmed.

"Did you find anything of importance?"

"Naw, nuthin' but oil papurs an' a Bibl'."

"Well, we better keep our eyes peeled on that bird. He's keen,—deep—and you can't tell what he may be planning."

"Tom's just bought a new Colts automatic," Hood announced.

"Yes, an' I'm itchin' to use her," Blackburn added.

CHAPTER XVII

ANOTHER week went by, and each day, but at different hours, an airplane roared above the city. It dashed near the earth no more, but remained so high that it looked like a slow-moving bird in the distance above. And the *Air Mail News*, carrying Associated Press dispatches and scathing editorials on crime, fell to the streets and furnished exciting talk for the people of the Kozart range.

One surprising event after another now seemed Coleman's lot. Kozart in his experience had become more thrilling than his wildest dreams had ever pictured it. He had been successful in his investigations to date; he had met Edna Hatfield, who now seemed in love with him; he had come to know an Indian Chief who offered him aid; he had heard an eccentric street-speaker, who later disappeared; deep in his heart he knew himself in love with Wathena Berry—yet she was the daughter of the sheriff, Hatfield's killer; and now the latest event was the appearance of a mysterious man who was publishing and distributing daily the *Air Mail News*. But finally came a night more thrilling and exciting than any he had ever known.

His telephone bell rang at midnight, and a strange voice spoke over the wire. And through this voice was to come to Coleman a power and inspiration that would fill his heart with renewed energy, and later develop into action and scenes surpassing any experience he had yet encountered.

"Hello," came a soft voice, like that of a woman.

"Hello," returned Coleman.

"Is this Roger Coleman?"

"Yes."

"Will you meet me same place, same hour, same day?"

"Who are you?"

"Pa-ga-la, Slo-b-aa," was the answer.

The moment these Osage words were spoken, there came to Coleman the realization of their meaning. With apprehension he told himself the words meant "injustice" and "two ways." "The same place, same hour, same day" must mean the stranger wants to see me in Opatonga City at the meeting place of Chief Bearskin. But he thought, "Perhaps it's a ruse to waylay and shoot me." Then he tried to retrace in memory his steps since coming to the Nation. He knew he had never discussed Kozart injustice sarcastically or critically with anyone except the Chief and Arthur Davis.

"All right, I will meet you there," Coleman said.

"Goodnight," came the instantaneous reply, and the receiver went up before Coleman could ask another question. Then he fell back on his pillow to lie awake throughout the night in the effort to solve the mystery.

The following morning the front page of the Kozart *Herald*, likewise the *Air Mail News*, was a mass of burning words upon prohibition and crime. Now only in the dead hours of the night was the *Air Mail News* thrown from the sky; from the faint noise and invisible flight it was known that the speeding plane was high and its position overhead safe. But the neatly folded newspapers landed in the streets as though the machine was flying low.

For another week the papers fought back at each other.

Tate Wheeler's tongue was sharp, his mind was keen, and he pictured with intense words the shameful results of the Volstead Act and the cowardice of the mysterious editor, all of which the Hatfield group approved; while from the trenchant pen of the *Air Mail News* editor came clarity of thought, vision, truth, daily awakening the citizens in the Kozart country to a better understanding of the power Hatfield had held over them for years. Particularly it was noted that the few Kozarts who could read and write were seen to fold the newspapers, put them into their pockets, and go home with the Indian grin on their faces; and it was rumored that some of them in the Kozart range were visiting the Kozart villages, huts, adobes, and were enlisting sympathy in the mysterious editor's favor.

On Saturday, the day Coleman was to meet Chief Bearskin again, now taking special precautions that no one followed him or suspected him in any way of going out of Kozart to meet an Indian Chief, he took the west-bound train to Nebrata, eighty miles away; there engaged an automobile, drove back to Opatonga City and went out to the home of the Indian, where another surprise awaited him.

As he entered, before him stood the man with the heavy beard, slouch hat, horn-rimmed glasses, and queer clothes,—the street-speaker he thought Hatfield had killed or had forced to leave the Kozart country.

"My friend, your friend," said Chief Bearskin, introducing the two. But the Indian made no mention of the stranger's name.

"I met you many years ago," the stranger began. "Your father was my friend."

Coleman looked on with curious gaze.

"You were only a little boy. But I can never forget

the Kentucky scenes, where I was a wandering peddler. For a time I suffered from aphasia, but I recovered."

Suddenly Coleman's mind flashed back to his boyhood days. It was the first time in years that the scenes had been so clear to him. "Oh, I know," he announced. "You knew me in Kentucky."

"In Lazy Point," the stranger added.

"Nearly twenty years ago."

"Yes. And I know Jake Hatfield is also from Lazy Point."

A little surprised, Coleman said, "I understood Hatfield has resided in the Kozart country all his life."

"You are wrong."

"Where did you first meet Father?"

"In Opatonga, long before he went to Kentucky to settle the estate of your uncle, whom Hatfield had left swinging from the 'hanging pines.'"

"Did you know what happened to Father?"

"Yes. When your father was returning to his home in Opatonga, bandits robbed and killed him, and an Osage Chief buried him. Then, in token of your father's loyalty and life among the Indians, they marked you; and on your body yet is the Osage brand."

"What is it?" asked Coleman, without betraying any emotion.

"An arrow over your heart, and a turtle, circle and frog under your right arm."

"How did you know about this?"

"Chief Bearskin has told me."

"How did he know it?"

"Well, you see, I knew the Blackburn boys and Claud Hood long before I entered college, and after Luke Berry moved to Kozart his wife wrote me Hatfield was making a killer out of Luke. And because she once kept Hatfield

from killing me, I wanted to aid her. So I came back to Opatonga and told Chief Bearskin about the Kentucky people. Then he told me of your father's death, and all about Hatfield's swindling of the people."

"You are an Indian?"

"Yes."

"That, of course, accounts for your courage."

"Perhaps, but I am interested in the welfare of my people, your people, our people, the human race; and some day men with unselfish motives will awaken to the perilous conditions of the red men."

"You have exactly expressed my feeling," Coleman said, sincerely.

"How long did you live in Lazy Point?" Coleman asked.

"Many years. I remained there until two years ago."

"You know Luke Berry?"

"Yes—I attended the birth of his daughter."

"How strange this all seems!" exclaimed Roger.

"I named her Wathena."

"You did?"

"Yes, it's an Indian name, and means purity."

Coleman paused a moment. Wathena's profile, her beautiful face, her golden hair, her winning smile, each thing she did and everything she said revealed sweetness, innocence and purity. In sharp contrast was the face and form of Edna.

"Were you ever in Washington?"

"Three months," the man replied.

"Were you working there?" Coleman asked.

"No. I begged Captain Mitchell to employ me, but was never able to convince him I was sane. And of course I don't blame him."

"Did you ever tell Captain Mitchell all you know about Hatfield?"

"No. I only told him if he would employ me, I could solve the Kozart problem."

"Then he doesn't know you are here?"

"No. But for some time I have worked in disguise among the Kozarts. I even feigned drunkenness, and was with the Indians that Al Dawson and Tom Blackburn took to Mexico."

"In the same car?"

"Yes. And moreover, Hatfield poured acid on me, kicked me, and laughed at my pain."

"How did you get back to Kozart?"

"They kicked me off near the Mexican border. But later I gathered the starving band together, and with help from Chief Bearskin we brought our people back. And now I am editor of the *Air Mail News*."

Coleman's eyes fairly glistened.

The editor opened his shirt, exposed his breast, and said as he pointed to the arrow above his heart, "Look! It is the Osage brand. I am going to help you and Luke Berry."

"Luke Berry!" Coleman exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Why, Luke is one of Hatfield's killers."

"Only because Hatfield has made him one."

As everyone should know, an Indian is always grateful to the man who does him a kindness, and at the first opportune time often doubly repays him. So it was with this editor, who for twenty years had not forgotten the day Hatfield kicked the crutches from under him, and probably would have killed him had it not been for Roger Coleman's father and Florence Bradley.

The stranger threw back his head in assurance, yet to Coleman came a premonition of tragedy as the editor said softly, but resolutely, "Tomorrow I announce myself as candidate for prosecuting attorney of Kozart, and one month from now I will reveal my name to the public."

"And when shall we meet again?" asked Coleman.

"Here, one month from today," the other replied, then turned and walked from the cottage into the darkness. Coleman returned to Kozart, puzzled, yet full of anticipation.

And while Coleman, by clever ingenuity, was daily finding enough evidence to convict fifty Kozart men in any honest court, he was also pursuing the course he had previously decided upon, that of a platonic, at least on his part, association with Edna Hatfield, one that would afford him opportunity he could have in no other way. But apart from the serious side of his investigation, and despite the fact that he had so far only been amused, and by way of diversion and information had continued such relations, the thought of Wathena was continually on his mind.

It often struck him as odd that he admired her. Why should he? She was the daughter of a killer, a barbarian, and a desperate man. "But I do admire her. And I only pity and sympathize with her father. But it's not through pity that I care for her. I simply cannot forget her," he would repeat to himself.

Wathena was cashier at the City Drug Store, opposite the building in which Coleman had his office. From this vantage point Coleman often gazed out and waved to her. And at noon each day, when her invalid mother was well enough to bring her lunch, he made special note of the kindness and tenderness with which Wathena treated her. They walked alone, talked low. Her mother always

seemed sad, but apparently trying to smile. All in all, Wathena had become his ideal and the consummation of his dreams.

The more Coleman called to see Edna Hatfield and the more bold and flirtatious she became, the more he thought of Wathena, her sad mother, and the wayward and ignorant father. And one day, while great crowds stood on the sidewalk searching the hazy clouds above in hope they might get a glimpse of the speeding planes of the *Air Mail News*, Coleman thought of the opening of Kozart's new city park, of the Indian street dance at night, and remembered it was to be a masked affair. "It's my chance! I'll telephone Wathena," he said.

When Wathena returned from lunch, Coleman called her over the telephone, and her heart throbbed as she found herself in conversation with the only man she had ever admired. As for that, her life had been devoid of romance, kisses, or tender caresses, nor had she indulged in flirtation of any kind. Coleman stood out in her mind as a noble man. No one had told her of his attentions to Edna, nor had she seen him with her, save the one time she had passed him on the street, and the few times they had been in the store.

"Hello," she softly said, in response to Coleman's voice on the wire.

"Have you ever attended an Indian pow-wow?" the voice asked, "and would you like to go?"

For a moment Wathena did not answer. "I have danced but very little," she said at length to herself. "I have no new dress, nothing good enough to wear." Then it dawned upon her, "Oh, it's a masked affair!" And she exclaimed, "Do you mean it?"

"I certainly do."

"But, I am not sure, Mr.——"

"No! No! Don't mention my name aloud!"

"Why?——" "Oh, he's ashamed of me," she thought, and little drops of tears fell from her long lashes as she looked up, and out of the window toward his office. Then she dropped her head and began to think. "No, I won't go. Yet, perhaps he was only joking," she thought. Then:

"How will you be dressed?" she asked, eagerly.

Like a flash came the thought, "Indian." "Well," he replied, "beaded band around my head. Domino mask. No shirt, buckskin trousers, soft-soled moccasins. And I will carry a big sunflower in my right hand. Now, how will you dress?" he added.

"Oh, let me see," she studied a moment. "I'll tell you. A large white hat, white dress with black sash, white shoes, and I will have a sunflower, too. But, really," she added, timidly, "I can't come unless I bring mother."

"Bring her. She will enjoy it. Don't fail me, as I have something to tell you. But please say nothing of my invitation. I will explain Saturday. Goodbye," Coleman said before Wathena had time to question further.

Wathena hesitated a moment. He was making money, seemed proud, independent, not the least flirtatious. The more she reflected, the more puzzled she became. She had really thought, from the way he smiled at her at times, and the look in his eyes, that he admired her. And too, he was not now a stranger to her; in fact, they had known each other several months. "But why?" she continued to think, "is he ashamed of me?"—"No, I will not go," she concluded. And she tried to cast all thought of Coleman from her mind. But when she went home Saturday evening, she began to dress for the masked affair.

"Where are you going?" asked her puzzled mother.

"Oh mother, I'm ashamed of myself. I forgot to tell you of the pow-wow tonight."

"With whom are you going, daughter?"

"No one."

"But you can't go alone."

"Of course not," Wathena replied softly.

Mrs. Berry sat down, slightly dismayed. It was evident that she felt unhappy, and did not want Wathena to go.

"Oh mother dear, don't you want me to go?"

"Yes, darling, bless your heart! I want you to go and enjoy yourself," her mother replied.

"But you look so sad."

"I was only thinking, daughter, what I would do without you. Bless your heart, run along. Mother's all right."

"But I want you to go with me."

"No, father would be angry," her mother said.

"He won't be home until midnight, mother. And he'll be drunk and go to bed, anyway. Come on, mother, and go."

"Do you really want me to go, daughter?"

"Yes, I am never happy without you."

"All right, darling, if you insist." And she wiped away the tears and bravely smiled at Wathena in devotion as they walked from the house arm in arm.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN Saturday arrived and the evening shadows began to fall, the current was cut off and the streets put in darkness to add a touch of mystery to the night. But soon, under the brilliant light of huge bonfires, the unusual spectacle presented a singular picture of a moving mass of Indians in colorful attire, bright blankets, beaded shawls and feathers. And mingling with them were citizens in clownish costumes and fancy dress of every conceivable style. And among the happy throngs were fluttering flags, banners, balloons, and on the street platform figures contorted comically to attract the eyes of the children.

Presently among the gay pleasure-seeking crowd Roger Coleman spied the white dress, white shoes, white hat, black sash, and the sunflower, and he quickly made his way through the surging mob. Once near Wathena, he whispered, "I'm so glad you've come, Miss Berry."

The scene, the music, and the fact that most of the people were masked added to her ease and comfort, and so thrilled and impressed was Wathena with the spirit of the evening that she almost forgot the manner in which Coleman had telephoned her when he had hung up before she had time to question him concerning his independent attitude. "Just say 'Wathena,'" she prompted.

"All right, Miss Wathena."

"No, just Wathena, please."

"As you say. But where is your mother?" he asked.

"She's sitting over there, and enjoying every bit of the fun. I am so glad she came," Wathena replied, as she moved her head in the direction of Mrs. Berry. "Mother seldom goes anywhere," she added.

"You are indeed devoted to your mother, and I admire such a lovely trait."

"Well, she's all I have, Mr. Coleman."

"Don't call me that. Just say 'Roger.'"

"All right, Mr. Roger."

"No, just plain Roger."

"All right!" Wathena retorted.

Had Coleman met Wathena on any other occasion, particularly in places where the people went unmasked, she would have been a different person, would have been thinking of her dress, shoes, hat, and would have been ill at ease. But on this occasion no one had come in evening attire, and besides, she thought herself more neatly dressed than most of those she saw. So it was but natural that the evening of revelry thrilled and filled her with ecstasy such as she had never before known.

"Shall we dance?" Coleman asked pleasantly.

"I can try."

But few times in her life had Wathena Berry danced; in fact, her experience was wholly confined to neighborhood parties; and love for her mother, and her father's cruelty had kept her away from many of them. But now, with opportunity, color, music, and the motions of the other couples rhythmically swaying among the fantastic crowd, position, steps, grace, and desire all came to her instinctively. The ease with which she and Coleman glided around filled spectators with curiosity, and they wondered who the couple were.

She danced once, twice, six times. And the soft compliance of her graceful body to Coleman's, her every step,

enchanted him. Her feet seemed to anticipate every movement that his own made over the wax-covered pavement.

Then, as they danced around the bandstand and took seats as the music stopped, Coleman turned his head and saw Edna Hatfield and one of her many admirers in a parked limousine near the curb.

"That's Miss Hatfield," Wathena announced, as she turned and saw the car.

"Yes, I saw her."

"Do you think she's pretty?"

"No, I do not."

"Do you like her?"

"There are many people more interesting."

"But," she said, "you did not answer my question."

"Oh, I beg your pardon!"

"Do you like her?" Wathena again asked him.

Evasive, yet in a humorous mood, he replied:

"Gee, look! Look at that big fat squaw. Look at her feet, her ears, the funny child! Looks like Carrie Nation had hit her in the face with a hatchet. Look, she waddles like a duck!"

"All right, Roger, don't get funny. I won't ask you about Miss Hatfield."

"Well really, the old squaw is much more interesting," he returned.

"Whoy-O!—Ya—Ya—Ya!"

"Wha—Who—Ho—Way!"

"Heap—Yep—Yep—Yep!"

"Wha-ho!"

Some hideous Chiefs and their squaws now joined the crowd and began to sing and dance, then broke apart and began to mingle with the white men and women, who in awkward steps tried to imitate the movements of the red-

skins. The street from curb to curb became almost a solid mass of gay, dancing couples, and it was interesting to note a tall man dancing with a short fat squaw, or a woman prancing like a young fawn, while her aged Indian partner moved with a lithesome gait. Among the gay crowd could be seen here and there Kozart society men or women bending their knees, raising their hands and shoulders and moving their bodies upward and downward in rhythm to the peculiar strains of the tom-toms, gourds, and weird sounds of the Indians' band.

Presently the Indian music ceased, and soon the Kozart orchestra began playing a dreamy waltz. Coleman was conscious of the feeling he had for Wathena, but he was also cognizant of her father's crime, and the fact that he would eventually be in the arms of justice, and that it would bring shame, perhaps disgrace, on his wife and daughter. Fully aware of it all, yet realizing his love for the girl, he was puzzled as to what he might say, what he could do, how he could aid her, and what the outcome might be. He pressed Wathena's hand, and she responded. They danced around, out to the edge of the curb beyond the bandstand, and to a point back of parked cars where they could not be seen.

"I love you, darling. I have loved you from the moment I first saw you. There is something pressing, my heart is hurting. I want to talk, to tell you of my own life. But I cannot," whispered Coleman. Wathena was speechless. It seemed like a dream as she listened to Coleman's appealing voice. And then he could no longer resist, but clasped her in his arms, kissing her—not madly, but tenderly, sincerely. "God knows, Wathena, I love you. My heart chokes me. This has been the happiest evening of my life."

"And I love you, too," Wathena murmured. As she

spoke, her trembling body seemed to give way under the strain and excitement of her first embrace in the arms of a man.

"If your love for me is pure and true, as I believe it to be, Wathena, never mention this meeting."

Following so swiftly on his declaration of love, this came as a shock to the girl. "Why?" she asked wonderingly.

"I can't explain."

"But why? Please tell me, Roger."

"Don't ask me—just trust me. Please trust me, that's all. Some day I'll explain," he said. And as quickly as he had clasped her in his arms and kissed her, just as suddenly he said goodnight, and left her. Then Wathena accompanied her mother home.

It was a solemn, sweet and memorable evening, in which each had been caught in the mesh of romance. Wathena smiled and cried, thinking and dreaming of a new world. She could not know the tragedies the future held for her.

The following day through the mail she received a typewritten note. It was unsigned, but she knew it could only be from Coleman. Her heart throbbed with emotion as she read the lines he quoted from Browning:

"Truth that's brighter than gem,
Trust that's purer than pearl,
Brightest truths, purest trust in the universe,
All were for me in the kiss of one girl."

And while he did not telephone her nor come near her in the ensuing days, she received a second typewritten message. It, too, was unsigned, but its contents made Wathena happier than she had ever been before.

"DEAREST WATHENA:

I am not going to write you that I was fairly saturated with the fragrance of your presence, captivated by your smile, and bewildered at the embrace. It is not like me to use such words nor to say such things, but I must admit that I found you more charming than any dream. I only wish I could be with you every day. Some day I hope you will know me as I am. Until that day you must trust me. If you love me, trust me, and if you trust me, never mention our meeting. The future will explain."

It might seem strange that Coleman, an investigator, with a brilliant mind, should have written such a letter to the daughter of one of Hatfield's most trusted men. But he was only human, and many a man before him, at the height of glory or fame, has become so attracted by a woman that his judgment has been impaired and his reputation risked, often leading to complete wreckage. For the first time in his life he had yielded to love, and he trusted her implicitly.

Yet on every Wednesday night, as requested by Edna, he was a guest at her home. And the more he saw of Edna, the more he realized the great value of environment, books, religion and law, and back of this the kind of lineage in the child.

Edna was now inviting him to all her gay parties, and he tried to enjoy them as her brazen friends danced, talked, drank, smoked, and did the other things that a silver flask will cause women to crave and to do.

Edna often fell back in a languishing attitude against a great pile of silky, soft cushions on her divan, her actions implying that she would allow him any privilege he might desire. She was in reality filled with a mad longing to possess him utterly. But so far at least, he had subdued and controlled any physical feeling she stirred in him.

As the days and weeks went by and Coleman's atti-

tude did not change, Edna planned to make him think she was really in love with him. She had to admit he was the only man she had failed to conquer. "What is love?" she would often ask herself. "And who is Coleman? A good-looking young man, who is entirely absorbed in books. How absurd it all is!" She would resolve to dismiss him from her mind, but each time they met, she felt a greater attraction toward him, and she could not bring herself to give him up.

"What do you think of this?" she asked him one night as they sat in her father's home, handing him the front page of the *Air Mail News*.

"To the Higher-ups: Your flagrant dishonesty, unpatriotism, and unscrupulous lust to dominate, at the cost of spilling human blood, some day will wreck your homes and happiness, and crush you in the dust of the earth. —Editor, *Air Mail News*."

Coleman read the paragraph, and subtly said, "Oh, I am tired of reading the sad tales of informers." And his real attitude was so disguised that Edna dropped the subject. With an unusual seriousness of expression, she asked, "Why are you so distant, Roger?"

"I am not intentionally reserved."

"But sometimes you seem insincere in your friendship for me, and cynical besides," she began. "I've seen father turn this village into a metropolitan city, but when I speak of his achievements you speak of the sky, clouds or sunset; and if I invite you to dinner you converse about books, dogs, or duck hunting. Then, when you meet me down town, you speak of business."

"Well——"

"Is that all you can say—'Well'?"

"What do you wish me to say, Edna?"

"You know what a woman likes, Roger."

"Why should I? I don't know anything about women."

"Why are you so different from other men?"

"I'm peculiar, I suppose."

"But sometimes I have thought you loved me, and I have come to love you."

"You are a woman of wealth, Edna."

"What difference does that make?"

"Well, to be frank with you, sometimes I think it might be best that we do not see each other. I could never do for you the things your father has done."

"Oh, that's absurd!"

"There is nothing so important right now," he thought, "as a continuance of platonic but purposeful relations with her."

Coleman had to acknowledge that she was beautiful, alluring, and that if she were really in love with him, or worse still, if he had become infatuated with her, it would be a hectic situation. "It would indeed," he murmured softly. And when he returned to his apartments that night he pondered long over the problem.

Not losing sight of his love for Wathena, nor his association with Edna, his mind of course was bent upon his duty. So bitter had been the direct attack on Hatfield by the mysterious editor of the air, that Coleman had noted an apparent change. There seemed to come over Hatfield a re-awakening of hate and a spirit of fight, which he had shown in the territorial days.

For the past few years, Hatfield had endorsed schools, churches, and financially aided such institutions, though of course it was only for publicity and selfish gain. And now, just when some of the schools were progressing so well, it was a sad fate that Hatfield's contempt and cruelty must affect them.

By means of an outside educational committee, Indian schools had been erected in the Kozart range, and other reservations. Prophylactic measures were instituted, segregating the trachomatous pupils into dormitories, bedrooms and dining rooms, where each pupil was given an individual towel, hairbrush, soap, pencils and books; and anti-septic solutions were used for disinfecting everything they touched.

But one afternoon, incensed over an article in the *Air Mail News*, Hatfield perpetrated a dastardly outrage while returning from an inspection trip to his oil wells.

Claud Hood, Luke Berry and Roger Coleman were in the automobile with Hatfield. The afternoon session of a school had just closed, and a score of little fellows with happy red faces, carrying books, satchels and dinner pails had left the building and started across the street, when Hatfield's big touring-car raced down the road and plunged through the group. The chauffeur looked back, and slowed down. But Hatfield merely glanced up, and said, "To hell with the skunks! Go on! Why don't the damned teacher look where she's going?"

Choked with indignation and resentment, but realizing his situation, Coleman purposely pushed his hat from his forehead, and let the wind carry it into the street behind him. Then he leaped out of the car, and went back in a cloud of dust to offer aid.

Luke Berry glanced back, and chuckled.

Hatfield said, "Education is making the infernal brats lazy—meaner than ever!"

After aiding the wounded victims of Hatfield's heartless act, Coleman returned to Kozart, went to his office, and for an hour pondered, wondering what the future held for him.

Upon reflection it was Harriet Beecher Stowe who

aroused the people to indignation against the practice of slavery. But most of the negroes were of such an age that they were able to take care of themselves. Yet in this, a greater day of education and luxury, many Indian children—regardless of age—are separated from their parents. And the love of an Indian father or mother for their children is as deep and fine as that of the parents of any race on earth. And the very thought of this fact, and of incidents such as Coleman had just been a witness to touched his heart as nothing else had ever done.

"Pitiful! Pitiful!" Coleman repeated to himself. When he went downstairs his eyes met the Hatfield group standing at the entrance of the bank. As usual, they were discussing the editor of the air.

Realizing that this editor was fast convincing the Indians that, unless they elected a man whom they could trust, they soon would be unable to till the ground on which they lived, and that many of the half-breeds and ignorant white men were being swayed against his own political ring, Hatfield was worried. "Why in hell don't you fellows get him?" he contemptuously asked Luke Berry and Claud Hood.

"Kain't ketch 'em, Jake," drawled Luke.

"It's like shooting at the stars with a Christmas toy, Jake," Hood replied. "He gets out of the way before we get started."

"But Blackburn said he'd get him."

"Oh hell! Tom's only dreaming. All you can say about this *Air News* bird, Jake, is 'Here he comes!'—'There he goes!'"

"Can't you spot the plane, boys?"

"Well, Jake, you remember the first plane we saw was dolled up with Indian signs. The next week he flew, he was in a white plane with flags attached to the wings and

tails. Then when he started flying at night, the planes seemed glazed, and he dipped and flipped a mirror reflection that obstructed our view," Dawson explained.

The speedy plane continued to soar high above the city each night, equipped with silent motor, and, like a phantom, it came, went, and was unseen. From the pilot-box the *Air Mail News* continued to fall.

About a week after the maiming of children by Hatfield's automobile, the principal of the school telephoned Coleman that eighteen of his fifty pupils had become affected with a disease over night, and twelve had gone completely blind.

"Do you know the cause?" Coleman asked.

"I think I do."

"What is it?"

"A concocted germ. It has been put into the water, and the poison has been drunk by the students."

"Do you suspect anyone?"

"Yes. Tom Blackburn was out here the day before the students became ill, and one of the boys says he saw him empty a bottle into the keg of drinking water; and those who drank from that keg were sick within an hour."

"Why did you call me?"

"Oh, I know more than you think I do."

"I don't understand what you mean," said Coleman.

"Yes, you do. But it's all right, Mr. Coleman. I'm your friend," said the professor. Yet Coleman resolved to reveal none of his secrets to him.

CHAPTER XIX

THE Kozart jail was full of helpless Indians; yet the stores and streets were filled with cunning confidence men and characters of the underworld. Feeling the shameful condition had reached a point beyond human endurance, the *Air Mail* editor published a startling challenge on the front page of the mysterious paper.

"Open Debate," it read. "There is no longer any official power in the Kozart country to conduct a legitimate inquiry into the drunken automobile parties or the increase of trachoma among the Indians, and the abduction of Kozart maidens. My heart bleeds for justice, and I can remain silent no longer. The Kozart country has become like putty in the hands of God-denying men, a vacillating clique which stands for nothing less than Bolshevism. Unless you rid it of these political grafters, the Kozart people can expect nothing but turmoil that borders on a state of anarchy.

"I hereby challenge the editor of the Kozart *Herald* to open debate upon the Volstead Act. Editor, *Air Mail News*."

Promptly the Kozart *Herald* replied:

"Editor, the *Air Mail News*.

Your challenge accepted. City Hall in Kozart. Saturday, October tenth, eight p.m. And no admission will be charged. Kozart Welfare Committee By Tate Wheeler."

The moment the challenge was read in the Kozart country people began to conjecture and await with excited expectancy the outcome of the meeting of the editors.

While the much-talked-of prohibition debate was three weeks away, Roger Coleman meditated. During these trying days he telephoned to Wathena daily and expressed his love, but continued to call on Edna Hatfield on Wednesday and Saturday nights.

Almost every day Coleman entered the drug store in which Wathena was at work, smiled, and looked at her intently, apparently with a deep desire to converse with her and unfold something to her. But he merely left a message now and then, always typewritten, never signed.

Wathena could not understand, nor could she think of any reason for his actions, further than that he was either ashamed to be with her because of her father's crude ways and ignorance, or that he was planning to deceive her. She had had little experience with men, and was unversed in the ways of modern life, yet in reality, and in strict contrast to the ignorant Luke Berry, she had inherited her mother's refinement and high ideals.

Meanwhile, intense was the interest in the coming debate. So widespread had been the news of the mysterious editor of the air that, on the day of the meeting, not only did the white citizens fill the streets and block the Kozart sidewalks, but the Indians came in droves.

Long before the doors of the City Hall were swung back, a wild and excited mob filled the sidewalks, and the moment entrance to the building was effected, people rushed madly inside and filled every available seat in the house. Even the aisles and the window-sills were packed. And, while every inch of seating or standing room was taxed to capacity, more than a thousand stampeded out-

side and around the building, craning their necks to the extent of contortion in an attempt to glimpse the mysterious editor.

Jake Hatfield, Claud Hood and the Blackburn brothers were all seated in the front row near the stage, while Roger Coleman had purposely taken a seat alongside Luke Berry, Al Dawson and Mart Massey in the center of the room. Roger appeared intensely interested, as though the expected speaker was a mystery to him, betraying nothing of his knowledge of the man's identity.

Silas Hood was chairman of the meeting. Hood's manner of speech was now polished as compared with that of the mountaineer days in Kentucky. He was the first to mount the stage, and in a pompous manner introduced Tate Wheeler.

"Friends and fellow citizens:" he said.

"You are here to listen to a debate upon prohibition between our respected editor and an unknown informer and fanatic, who is trying to tear down what your oldest, most responsible and respected citizens have built up during the last twenty years——"

"Hurrah for Hood!" Clap! Clap!

"You're damn right," came a voice from somewhere in the audience.

"But listen, friends," Hood continued. "Reports have reached me that the air editor is not only a sham, but that he will not appear here tonight. This, however, does not prevent our speaker from telling you why the Volstead Act is the most damnable thing that a few Washington officials ever put over on the people. It gives me pleasure to introduce Tate Wheeler. He is for Kozart and her future."

Hood then sat down.

A few shouts went up, but the applause was not so great as Hood or Hatfield had expected, when Tate Wheeler, the suave and sharp-tongued editor, arose.

With a practised bow, he began.

"Gentlemen: I am sincerely opposed to prohibition as a matter of principle. If it could last, it would ruin our country. The time is coming when such laws must go down and out! The spirit of human freedom is struggling for existence against a law enacted by hypocrites. Crimes of youth are increasing. The high schools are filled with young boys and girls who crave drink, and all because of prohibition. Fifteen years ago no one ever heard of a high school girl carrying a padded narcotic compact, and yet today you find her books spotted with incense powder that is adulterated with a poison more dangerous than any drink ever stilled. Poor people go without drink, while wealthy citizens keep their basements jammed with bottles of imported gin and barrels of the finest of liquors. Ninety-six out of every hundred revenue men are bandits and burglars, and we all know it——"

"That's right, you bet!" said a voice.

"Every damned one of them," shouted another.

"Hurrah for Tate Wheeler!" came cries from the audience.

Wheeler now apparently began speaking for the benefit of the more intelligent group, for he continued:

"Before prohibition, did you ever see wives and daughters at country clubs drinking on the dance floor, or see them out on the lawn trying to sober up?"

"No! No!" came shouts from the crowd.

"Did you ever take a whiskey flask to school when a boy?"

"Hell, no!" came voices.

"But they do it now," shouted a roughneck.

"I want to tell you," Wheeler continued, "that since the Eighteenth Amendment was written into the Constitution, the American doctrine of personal liberty is no more, and the sacred precincts of the home have been violated with impunity."

"That's right! You tell 'em, Wheeler!"

More shouts from the audience.

Wheeler smiled as he said, "And when any decent citizen comes home and finds that a band of legalized thugs have entered his home to take away his refreshing drink, what must he think of a government that puts a cheap badge on the lapel of a burglar and gives him a free pass to our basement?"

The people became boisterous.

"To hell with such laws!" came a coarse voice.

"The time has come to kick reformers into the gutters and smear their bodies with mud. Let us have freedom.

"And in conclusion, I ask you to remember—it is the dry-talking but wet-thinking men who tell you when to vote, how to vote and what not to drink. But when you ask for aid or a decent price for your corn, cotton or hogs, they pay you what they damn please."

Then, as Tate Wheeler sat down, men—the men who believed neither in education, morals nor law—arose in their seats, waved their handkerchiefs and hats, and began to sing:

"Give us w'iskey!
We need no laws.
T'hell with re-lijun
An' gov'm'nt dogs!"

"Where is he?"—"Who is he?"—"What does the editor of the *Air Mail News* look like?" came voices from the curious crowd, whose eyes were now glued upon the

stage. Necks were craned, some of the crowd giggled, some applauded, some hissed. All were amazed when from behind the side curtains of the stage the man of mystery emerged. He was tall and thin, with a bearded face. The beard and the horn-rimmed spectacles he wore formed a sufficient disguise to conceal his real identity. But by some he was recognized as the mysterious man who had stirred Kozart with his impassioned oratory a few weeks before. He had discarded the queer costume he had worn at that time, and was dressed now in a well-fitting dark suit. His appearance was dignified and impressive.

Many of the vast assemblage instantly recognized him as the soap-box orator. But none dared reveal their feelings. And as he flung his hat onto the table beside him silence gripped the room.

He was alone on the stage. No one offered to introduce him. Eyes were staring, necks were strained. Then in a calm and collected manner he began:

"Ladies and Gentlemen:

"This opportunity brings tears to my eyes, fills my heart with joy, and for the happiness it gives me I will lay down my life for you. Thank God tonight for the privilege of being before you."

Then he paused a moment to see if all the crowd could hear him. Raising his voice, and weighing every word, he walked from one side of the stage to the other, lifting one long arm in an emphatic gesture, and exclaimed:

"The enforcement of a sweeping law which was framed to promote the greatest good to the greatest number of people has been met by disloyalty and defiance—even such as you have listened to just now from those who think wholly selfishly and go through life with eyes fixed solely on their own prosperity and pleasure. No words of mine can picture, even meagerly, the danger, the terror,

and the great evil skulking in the shadows of your homes and your schools."

The room was in dead silence.

"Demagogues are trying to divide the citizens of this nation against themselves, and only to further their own self-interest. But no fair-minded, self-respecting citizen need fear to speak openly, freely, and to state the truth about prohibition."

"Amen! Amen!" came from a suffering victim's voice.

"The country has accepted the passing of the saloon. Marital relations are better, more sanitary conditions exist, educational ideals are higher, bank saving deposits have increased. The poor man's family is better housed, fed and clothed today than ever before. Money that would be spent over the bar for whiskey is now being spent for food, shoes and books.

"The pro and con of prohibition was threshed out in private homes, on street corners, in banks and business offices, in the railroad shops, in the churches and public meeting-places; and that great American problem has been decided."

"Is that so?" someone yelled.

But the speaker went on: "Since the world began, after every great war a crime-wave has swept the country. Almighty God only knows what a terrible condition we would be in today were we a country of open saloons, and when any American citizen claiming to be sane gets up before an audience and states that prohibition is against the Constitution, he is either uninformed or a fool, or perhaps both."

"The hell you say!"

"Don't you want a drink, feller?"

But, undisturbed by the interruptions, the editor con-

tinued: "The man who says the Eighteenth Amendment was put over by a coterie of fanatics, while the voting population was abroad fighting overseas,—not only to protect his country, but all mankind—is wrong. America was two hundred and seventy-eight years fighting for prohibition. In 1642 the Maryland Colony passed a law punishing drinking by a fine of one hundred pounds of tobacco. In 1644, Pennsylvania made it illegal to sell liquor to Indians and whites. In 1650, Connecticut passed a law against tippling, and she put her intoxicated people in the stocks for six hours. In 1700 New Hampshire passed a temperance law. And in 1851 Maine wrote the prohibition lines into her State Constitution.

"Tate Wheeler talks as though prohibition violates personal liberty and the principles of the American Constitution. He says that the boys were in the battlefields of France fighting for America when Congress enacted prohibition; but he doesn't explain that the people of Maine have accepted prohibition for seventy-five years, and that seventeen states were bone-dry before the Volstead Act was passed. And, of all states, this new one should be now and forever dry. But it is not, and never has been."

"An' 'tain't agoin' be, feller!" came a shout.

"You're crazy as hell!" cried a boisterous voice.

These bitter remarks were to be expected, but the speaker was swaying and holding the crowd to him. His voice reverberated for a block away as he turned his attention to the Indian cause, and went on:

"For over a hundred years the Indians have been kicked and cuffed about. Ignorance alone holds them down. Under the right policy the Indians will be less nomadic and superstitious. The day of paint, feathers, blankets and warlike garb has passed. Industrial and

social life will increase, and when given an equal chance the Indians will prove useful and valuable citizens to our nation."

"The good ones are all killed," some ruffian yelled.

"Shut up!" came a voice.

"Let the man talk!" someone added.

"More than ten thousand Indians went overseas to fight for America. They subscribed twenty-five million dollars for Liberty Bonds, purchased two million dollars' worth of War Savings Stamps. When we look upon their record, it is a disgrace to the people of this range that we allow grafting politicians to control the Kozart country and to rob the Indians of their homes given them in this state."

"Take him out!"

"Hurrah for Wheeler!" came shouts.

But the mysterious editor only raised his voice, and said:

"If this big state is to exist and prosper, and if the Kozarts and other uneducated people here are to live in comfort and be protected, you must go to the polls on November tenth and vote for the man who will honestly serve and protect you.

"In the name of God, in the name of justice, I implore you to elect a man who will not make his own laws, but will obey the Constitution, protect our flag, and treat the Indians fairly, for they are real, true Americans."

"Boo! Boo!" came shouts and hisses.

But the sternness of the greater part of the audience caused the boos and hisses to die quickly, as the editor of the air continued: "Tonight I announce my candidacy for the office of County Attorney. If you elect me, I promise you faithfully I'll protect you, your interests; and with your help I'll turn Kozart into a law-abiding, peace-

ful and happy place in which to live, and every Indian will get back what rightfully belongs to him."

During his speech he had continued to wave his hands, move his fingers, and make signs and gestures that only a few of the white people understood, but all of which the Indians knew the meaning of. The redskins stared, but they made no commotion, for they knew too well what any demonstration on their part would mean.

Still as a tombstone was the crowd before him as he shouted, "On Saturday, November seventh, in the public streets of Kozart, I will read to the public a thirty-eight page record of Jake Hatfield. I will tell you who killed Ed Dixon, and the reason for his murder, who adopted Blanche Okema, and kept her his mistress for ten years. I will name the man who shot Lizzie Wewoka, who drowned Gordon Haines, who defrauded a crippled woman the day she fell heir to oil lands, then had her killed the following night."

Claud Hood looked on and scowled.

Silas Hood was amazed.

Hatfield's eyes grew wild.

His voice tense with emotion the speaker said, "Over twenty years ago I met with a great misfortune. But two years ago I left the hills of Eastern Kentucky and came here to aid and defend the Indians and ignorant white men, even at the cost of my life. My name is Hickey. My friends call me 'Doc'. God bless you all. Good-night."

Then, as the audience gasped, the dynamic editor stepped quickly behind the stage curtain, leaped through an open window that someone had purposely cleared, and, entering a waiting car, drove rapidly away.

Boiling with indignation and excited, as the turmoil among the audience became general, Tate Wheeler for-

got that he was to reply. As chairs were overturned, quarrels and fights began, people were knocked down and trampled in the mad rush.

"He will never live to tell the story," Claud Hood remarked.

"Heap brave man!" softly murmured the Indians, who understood what the editor had said, and they nodded at each other and grinned.

The mystery of the editor's identity was no longer a secret. The meeting had been like a swiftly-moving, vivid-actioned story, holding the crowd spellbound, as the curious and excited audience wondered what was going to happen next. Jake Hatfield seemed stunned. Luke Berry edged quietly out of the building.

Then, as the confused mass milled about, imagination soaring high and tongues wagging, Claud Hood, his brother Silas, Tom Blackburn and Jake Hatfield strolled over to the Hatfield Bank into the conference room.

"Well boys, I see but one way out," announced Claud.

"And I'm thinking the same way," chimed in Silas.

"So shall it be," decreed Hatfield. And the conference closed as quickly as it had been formed.

Tom Blackburn went home and oiled his gun.

CHAPTER XX

WHILE Hatfield resolved to dispose of the *Air Mail* editor in a lawless way, the car with the speaker raced to Opatonga City, where at midnight he met the Indian Chief and Roger Coleman, who had trailed closely behind him.

In Coleman's mind, Hickey's act was the most daring and fearless deed he had ever known any man to attempt. "No one could have made me believe that any man would do what you did tonight," he declared.

"But why not?" asked Hickey.

"Well, I was trembling every second, and expected you to be killed."

"Cowards never shoot in the open," was Hickey's stern reply.

"What is your next move?"

"I shall publish the *Air Mail News* until election day."

"And you will not be in Kozart until then?"

"Yes, I am going there tomorrow night and talk with Berry."

"What!"

"Tomorrow, I said."

"Don't do it, Hickey."

"Yes, I must see him and talk with him."

"Please don't go."

"But I have to see him."

"You don't know these men, Hickey. They are vile and despicable, and will kill you, sure as the sun rises and sets."

"I am not afraid to die."

"But why should you go?"

"I owe it to Luke's wife, to her child, to God, and I am going, Coleman. It's my duty."

"But you understand, Doc, if you are elected, you go into office with authority. That's what you want, and it's what I want to see. So please remain away until then."

"No, Roger, I am an Indian. Hatfield has killed my people, and as God is my judge, I am doing what He tells me to do. I must go. I know Luke Berry will stick by me. I saw him in the crowd, I saw you watching him, and I saw him leave the building. And when I left by the rear door his primitive instinct told him which way I would go. God told me Luke wanted to talk with me, and when I got out of town I saw a light in the road. By the signal I knew it was Berry, and I stopped. He was crying, and he said he must talk to me. Then another machine swerved into the road, and Luke was nervous and scared. I told him I would see him tomorrow night at his house. And I am going."

"But it may mean your life, Hickey."

"What is death, Roger, if we can serve God as He wants us to, and I can help my people?"

"But if you don't go, Luke will understand why you didn't come."

"It's the white man who makes promises, but it's the Indian who keeps them. I am going to see Luke. I saved his life once and perhaps I can save it again. He needs me now, Roger, his wife needs me, Wathena needs me, and I'm going, for it may be the last time I shall see him."

There was no swaying of Hickey's mind.

"Well," said Roger, "I can only say that if the worst

comes to the worst, I will carry on where you leave off."

Hickey arose, his tall, angular frame towering above Coleman's head, and he said, "You were too small, you never knew—but some twenty odd years ago back in Eastern Kentucky, in his store, Hatfield kicked the crutch from under my arm, and treated me like a dog. And perhaps you were too young to remember the time you picked up an injured pigeon from the muddy street and brought it into the store to warm it by the fire, and because you refused to feed it to a hungry cat, Hatfield slapped your face and burned the bird alive. Neither do you know that Blanche Okema, the victim of a brutal attack by him, was my sister."

"Blanche Okema!"

"Yes, I learned all about it after Hatfield left Kentucky. But it was too late."

"Then your name is not Hickey?"

"No, I have gone under the name of Hickey only because Hatfield knew me as Hickey. He brought my sister to this country, and when he got tired of her he killed her,—yes, killed her, and had her body destroyed."

Hickey seemed exhausted, speechless at this recollection, and he buried his face in his hands, his shoulders shaking, while Chief Bearskin and Coleman sympathetically put their arms about him.

"But again I beg of you not to go to Kozart," Coleman pleaded.

Hickey only shook his head, with some effort managing to whisper, "If they get me, when you find my body, tear the heel off my right shoe, and in the hollow of it you will find an Indian code. Take it to Chief Bearskin, and carry the message to my people. Goodnight," he said, and left the room. Coleman at once returned to Kozart.

At the break of dawn following the debate on prohibition, Luke Berry was called to the Hatfield mansion and given the command to kill the editor.

"Yeh mean kill Hickey?" he asked, in utter amazement. His trembling lips bespoke his sympathy for the man who had been his only real friend during his early married life.

"Yes," was Hatfield's stark reply.

Luke Berry stood for a moment in silence, living over the pitfalls of his past, making mental pictures of regrettable mistakes. Well he recalled the night Wathena was thought to be dying, and how Hickey had saved her life. His lips twitched and his heart beat painfully as he reflected upon the countless crimes he had committed for Hatfield.

"'Ee's thur unly rall frien' I ebber 'ad. 'Ee's nebber done nobody no 'arm. I kain't—I kain't," Luke was thinking to himself.

Jake Hatfield sat and glared at Luke like a beast.

"Kill 'em?" was all the poor fellow seemed able to utter. His quivering voice was beginning to thicken and choke. Besieged with fear, battling for the right to remain true and loyal to the man who had been a real friend, a friend in time of need, in his darkest hour, and possessed with a premonition of the future, Luke stood rigid, his eyes in a set stare.

"Doc wuz allus kind, allus good. 'Ee's stuck t'muh wen ebberbody else turned thar backs. Awh! I jes' kain't,—I won't!" ran Luke's tortured thoughts. Hatfield's cold, piercing eyes stared at him in contempt.

The banker did not wait long for Luke's answer, but demanded, "And why not? He's a contemptible cur!"

"But Jake, I jes' kain't tell ye! Ye ax me t'do some-

t'n I kain't—doncha see? Doncha understan', Jake, I hain't t'good, but 'ee's named our babe, an'——"

"Turning yellow, eh!" Hatfield said bitterly.

"Naw! Jake—naw! But doncha see——"

"See hell! The skunk's trying to ruin you, too."

"Mebbe I ought'r leave har, Jake," Luke quivered out.

"So you're a coward, after all! I brought you out here, bought you a home, automobile, made you sheriff, and when you see a skunk trying to ruin me, you turn yellow as a dog!"

"Naw, Jake, naw! Ye knowd I hain't afeerd o' ennybody, but Hickey wuz muh unly frien' after ye kum t' Kozart. 'E was good t' muh an' thur kid."

"The kid hell!" interrupted Jake.

"Awh, I know'd I hain't fitt'n t' raise a gal, an' I hain't nebber lived rite, but sum'ow I jes' sorta fergat m'se'f an' hain't keered fer a long time."

"So you refuse, eh?" asked Hatfield violently.

"Jake, I hain't a-goin' t' kill nobod-dy, no more."

"The hell you won't!" shouted Hatfield.

"Nah, Jake, I bin wid ye fer fo'teen years, but I kain't kill Doc. I'll quit fu'st! Har's muh badge, Jake. I guess I kin git 'long sum'ow."

Luke unstrapped his belt and from the holster took out the two guns he had carried for twenty years, the handles of which had many notches in proof of the deadly accuracy of which he had always been proud. But now he felt ashamed, and deeply remorseful.

Hatfield looked askance, thinking of a recent mortgage Luke had placed on his home, for which he had advanced him the money. He thought of what Luke knew about himself, his crimes, and that keen government men might persuade or force him to tell. "That would be

fatal to me," he mentally observed. Then, too, his filthy mind flashed to Wathena. "She's a peach—beautiful,—and she can't ever pay the mortgage. With old Luke out of the way, things would be better, anyway."

Hardened in his egotism, selfishness and ingratitude, his desire for money and power steadily increasing, at that moment Hatfield secretly resolved to do away with Luke Berry. "Well, Luke," he said suavely, "if you feel so bad about it, we'll just kidnap him until after election. How's that?"

Luke's eyes brightened, his voice strengthened, he stood erect. "Awh, Jake, ye don't know'd 'ow good hit makes a feller feel. Ef ye ebber done Luke a fav'r, don't kill 'em."

"All right, Luke. Here are your guns back. I don't want them. We'll see Blackburn and Dawson, and I'll give Hickey his choice—leave the state, or we'll hold him awhile."

"But 'ow ye goin' t' find 'em, Jake?"

"Blackburn followed him last night."

"Did 'ee?"

"Yes. Dawson followed close behind the automobile he drove away in after the debate. Hickey stopped just outside of town and met another man, but the car whirled away when Dawson's headlights flashed on him."

Luke's frame quivered for a moment, for it was he who had met Hickey on the outskirts of Kozart.

"Wal, whar did 'ee go?"

"To Opatonga City."

"An' Al foller's 'em?"

"For a ways. But Bob Blackburn had three men in cars stationed at every road leading into Kozart last night, and four planes in the air."

"Whar's Hickey livin'?"

"Oh, Blackburn and Dawson will get him all right."

Luke gripped his chair, his teeth clamped tightly, and tears filled his eyes. "But ye sed ye wouldn't kill 'em, Jake!"

"Sure, that's what I mean, Luke. We'll give him a chance to leave the state, or we will put him in jail until after Bob's elected. He could never beat Blackburn, but he's stirring up trouble among the Indians, and the skunk's got to quit it, or we'll bump him off."

Distrusting his own henchmen, and afraid Luke might attempt to thwart his murderous plan, Hatfield resolved to do away with the editor promptly, and to kill Luke also.

Luke's face relaxed, his eyes gleamed with relief.

"Thanks, Jake," he said, "ef ye don' kill 'em."

Since it was his intention to be on the ticket for governor at the next state primaries, Hatfield was now more careful and diplomatic than heretofore in doing away with those he opposed, or who opposed him. Yet his mind now moved swiftly, and with a relentless purpose in deception and trickery, even against his own trusted man.

"Here," he said to Berry, as he opened the drawer of his writing-desk and extracted a sheet of paper which resembled an ordinary oil lease blank. "Sign this, Luke, then take the night train to Opatonga City."

"Whut is hit?" Luke questioned.

"Regular lease, that's all. You and Hood sign it, and I will fill it in, and tomorrow date it Opatonga City, and file it away, and if either of you are accused of kidnapping that damned crazy editor, this will prove that you were out of town, you see?" Hatfield said with much assurance.

"Kinder a good plan, I reckon," Luke replied, and moved near the desk. "I hain't gittin' tender'arted, Jake, ye knowd, but I kinder think we-uns ought'r git 'long wid-out kill'n people ennymore."

"You're right, Luke, and we've been friends too long to part now."

"Yep, an' ye knowd I hain't nebber refused enny kind o' things ye axe muh b'fore, Jake, 'cause I likes ye an' wunt t'he'p ye."

"All right, Luke—sign right here."

Having implicit faith in the man who was to end his life in tragedy, Luke Berry signed without the slightest suspicion of deception.

"All right, Luke, that will protect you. Don't miss that train, and tell your wife you're on a case."

"Sho' tootin'! I hain't overlook'n nuthin'," Luke answered, as he turned and walked out, thinking he had saved Hickey's life, not for a moment dreaming that his own, as well as Hickey's, was in greater jeopardy than ever.

The moment Luke Berry departed, Hatfield telephoned to Chief-of-Police Claud Hood, and asked him to come over at once.

"Put your peepers on this, my boy," said Hatfield, as Hood arrived, took a seat, and read a signed confession.

"We planned, plotted, constructed and mailed the bomb that caused the death of Pat Hogan and Henry Wells at Derrick Number Four. We drowned Gordon Haines and killed Lizzie Wewoka when we were drunk. We have been the ringleaders of crime in the Kozart country for fourteen years, but we will leave the state if not subjected to arrest. Luke Berry."

Hood was perplexed. "I don't understand this, Jake," he said, in surprise.

"The skunk refused!"

"Refused what?"

"To bump the editor."

"But—you don't mean to——?"

With admonitory hand and commanding voice, Hatfield interrupted Hood. "No questions—no sentiment, Claud. Luke's been getting worse for three years. He is not to be trusted, he actually took sides with Hickey, and he's dangerous to us both."

"How did you get him to sign this 'confession'?"

"Easy!" exclaimed Hatfield, quite pleased with himself. "Told him Dawson would kidnap Hickey, and it would be best that he be out of town, asked him to sign a paper that would make it appear he was in Opatonga City on a certain date, then I switched papers on him. Luke can read a little now, you know, but only with great difficulty and very slowly. He didn't have time to find out the difference."

"Oh, I see—great!"

"Very simple," nodded Hatfield.

"But what about Hickey?"

"Well, we'll show him this confession, force him to sign it also, and of the string of crimes make him the central figure. See here!" Hatfield turned, and from the drawer took another prepared confession, which related other crimes, and stated that Luke and Hickey had directed and had charge of the box cars that took drunken Indians to Old Mexico.

"But what if Hickey refuses?" suggested Hood.

"Bump him off!"

"What about Luke?"

"Nab him at the train tonight."

"What will we tell his wife and kid?"

"To hell with them!" snapped Hatfield.

"Luke's been with us a long time, Jake. I kinda feel sorry for him."

"Yes, but he's a skunk, and dead men tell no tales."

"I guess you're right, Jake. But it will shore be tough

on Mrs. Berry and the girl. And she's a nice kid, too," he added.

"Oh, I'll take care of Wathena."

During the day Luke Berry got word to Hickey, through Roger Coleman who gladly undertook the delivery of the message, telling him not to come to Kozart that night as intended, as Berry was going to Opatonga City and would see him there instead.

But when the ten o'clock westbound train arrived in Kozart that night, Claud Hood stepped up to Luke as he was about to board it, and said, "I want you, Luke. Jake says you better go by automobile."

Still happy over Hatfield's promise not to kill Hickey, Luke inquired, "Ye mean hit, Claud?"

"Yes, Jake's waitin' to see you."

Luke went with Hood, but their destination was the police station, and instead of being met by Hatfield, Berry was stripped of his guns, badge and uniform, and thrust into a gloomy cell, where the solid wall was unbroken by windows, and there was barely enough air to keep him alive.

"Claud! Claud! Wadda ye mean?" Luke cried in amazement.

"Oh hell! Ask yer pal Hickey."

"But, Claud, ye hain't turn'n muh down, air ye?"

The cell doors slammed to. That was Claud's answer.

The night went by. No one came near Luke, no one saw him, nor did any of the attendants pay any attention to his heart-rending appeals. He threw himself on the hard iron cot, and sobbed. Now that he was behind closed bars sordid realities of an ill-spent life began to dawn upon him.

"Bob, kum 'ere! Tom! Claud! Jake, wadda ye mean?" Luke cried. "Wun't sum o' ye har muh?"

But the odoriferous jail walls alone heard his pitiful appeal. None of his friends came to see him. Divested of the badge and gun that he had worn for years while defying God, education and the law, his life was drawing to a bitter end.

CHAPTER XXI

WHEN three days had elapsed without the *Air Mail News* appearing, Roger Coleman started on a hurried trip to Washington. Reports were circulating that Hickey was a government dog, that his plane had been wrecked or shot down, and had been seen falling in flames some distance from the city. But no one had found the body or the wreckage.

The Kozart *Herald* came out now daily with vicious attacks upon reformers. Meanwhile, Hatfield sat at his desk in the bank planning an evil fate for Berry's innocent daughter.

As the days went by, Wathena worried about her father, for he had not been at home for more than a week, still none of those she asked about him appeared concerned. Her employer, Doctor Justice, was out of the city, and her mother ill in bed.

Wathena was in constant attendance at her mother's bedside as soon as her day's duties at the drug store were over. They were almost destitute, as, without her father's help, Wathena's small salary would not cover the bills that were piling up. Winter was approaching, they were nearly at the end of their resources, and were sad and desperate.

"Where is papa?" Wathena asked of Hatfield over the telephone when he returned from a trip out of town.

"I'd rather not tell you, Wathena."

"He has been away more than a week, Mr. Hatfield."

"Yes, I know he has."

"Do you know where he is?"

"Yes."

"Oh, please tell me!" she pleaded.

"Excuse me a minute," he said, then turned and spoke to his daughter, who was standing in the hall. "Are you going out tonight, Edna?"

"Yes, dad—why?"

"Nothing, except that some of the boys want a little game of poker, and I wanted to know if you would be at home."

"No, dad—I've been invited to see 'The Tornado.' It's the first time the New York company has come to Opatonga City," Edna replied, surveying herself in the long gold-framed mirror, with, of course, no vision of the terrible real tornado that was destined to strike Kozart within the year.

"All right, Edna." Then he spoke very softly into the telephone, "Hello, Wathena."

"Hello," she replied.

"Say nothing to your mother—understand? But you come to my home this evening about eight o'clock, and I will tell you."

"Thank you, Mr. Hatfield. I'll come."

Wathena told her mother she was going down town to make inquiries as to the whereabouts of her father. When she rang the bell at the Hatfield home, instead of a maid responding, Hatfield himself came to greet her.

"Come in, Wathena," he said, in his most gracious manner.

Through the large oval opening that led to the living-room, Wathena noticed the shades were drawn and the lights very dim, which caused her to hesitate for a moment.

"Where is papa? Mother is worried to death," she said humbly.

Hatfield noticed her nervousness, and with cruel delight he said, "Wathena, I am sorry, but your father has proved a traitor."

"Mr. Hatfield! What do you mean?" she exclaimed.

"I might as well tell you the truth, Wathena. That is what you came for."

"Yes, yes! But what has my father done?"

"Confessed to being a leader in crime."

Wathena gasped, then cried: "Where is he now?"

"In the federal jail at Opatonga City," Hatfield said coldly.

For a moment Wathena did not grasp his remark. She was thinking only of the illness of her mother, the continuous struggle she had always had, and their sad plight. Then her mind leaped to remembrance of the many cruel acts of her father. "Yes," she thought to herself, "papa was a drunkard, he was mean at times, but at other times he was good and kind, and his faults were mostly because he had no education and wouldn't try—didn't care." Now she saw it was all Hatfield's fault. As she caught his insolent, sensuous expression she understood instantly his evil intentions.

"Do you want to read his confession?" Hatfield asked her brazenly.

"No, I will go home," and she began to cry.

However, before she could arise, Hatfield took her by the hand and said softly, "Do you know, Wathena, you are the most beautiful girl in Kozart. I have always admired you. Come and live with me. I will give you a home, and you will be happy."

"I could not think of such a thing!" she replied indignantly. "Besides, my mother——"

"Oh, she's getting old, anyway," Hatfield retorted.

"Mother means everything to me."

"But she's old, sick, an invalid, and you would be better off without her," he brutally declared.

Wathena sobbed. "Mother is all I have," she said, with a trembling voice, "and I love her."

"But if you come here you can have a car, a maid, a chauffeur, pretty clothes, diamonds—don't you see? Then besides, if you are nice to me, I might have your father released."

Wathena's soft eyes turned to balls of fire.

"You are insulting!" she exclaimed. She arose and attempted to open the door, but when she tried to turn the knob she found that it was locked.

Hatfield affected tender persuasion. Failing in this and becoming indignant, he changed his pursuit to a brutal one. He grabbed her savagely and kissed her. Wathena protested furiously, and jerked loose from his embrace. He then madly seized her, and sought to subdue her by force. He muffled her mouth, threatening her if she cried out.

"Help! Help!" she screamed in spite of him, and her voice was heard by Hatfield's chauffeur, who rushed from the garage, and, peering through the window, recognized Wathena. He telephoned to her mother, "Come quickly! Your daughter is being attacked in the Hatfield home!"

The chauffeur then went to the front door, pushed the bell and darted away, thinking this might distract Hatfield from the attempted attack. And his effort was successful, for the house became silent—but only for a moment. A second pushing of the bell brought silence again. But soon Hatfield, thinking it the work of prankish boys, renewed his attack. Fighting with tigerish eyes and ani-

mal strength, Wathena succeeded in breaking loose. She dashed out of the side room door, through the hall, into the kitchen. She found that door locked, but she quickly raised a window, plunged through the screen, and onto the ground, and started away. As Hatfield opened the kitchen door he saw the chauffeur emerging from the garage, and commanded him to drive Wathena home.

"Tell the old lady she was knocked down by an automobile, and if the old witch gets smart, bat her over the head. Understand?"

"Yes sir," said the chauffeur, and drove the girl home as he had been ordered to do.

Years of grief and sadness had brought deep lines to Florence Berry's face, and the long golden hair—once her pride and glory—had turned to a silver gray. Wathena was her life, and when the anonymous telephone message reached her she was frantic. Despite the illness that had kept her confined to bed for many days, she ran out of the house toward Hatfield's stately mansion. Mounting the marble steps between the tall white columns of stone, she pushed the door-bell. Hatfield opened the door, and into his arms fell the hysterical mother, faintly asking, "Where is she, Jake? Tell me—where is Wathena?"

"Wathena's all right," was his calm reply.

"But someone telephoned me. Was it a mistake, Jake? Is she all right?"—unable to control herself.

"Ridiculous!" retorted Hatfield. "What could happen to her here? You'd better thank me for saving her life. Wathena was struck by an automobile, but not injured. She was shaken up a little—that's all."

"Oh, thank God, Jake, that it was all a mistake!" cried Florence. Yet she was not at ease, and seemed unable to relieve herself of the feeling that Wathena was in dan-

ger. "Struck by an automobile!" she cried. "Are you sure she was not hurt?"

"Calm yourself, old girl. She was only badly frightened, I tell you. I happened to be passing, and my chauffeur took her home about ten minutes ago, so what in hell are you weeping about? You'll find her at home," Hatfield said in a freezing tone.

As Florence Berry started to leave, Hatfield added, "Wathena can tell you about Luke's confession."

"Confession!" Florence repeated after him. "Luke's confession! What do you mean, Jake?" She pressed her hand to her head as if trying to understand, all the time her temperature rising fast.

"Yes—he confessed," snarled Hatfield.

"What did he confess?"

"Oh, a-plenty."

"My God! Why don't you explain to me, Jake?"

"To you I am Mister Hatfield—understand?"

"Yes—I know, I understand," she replied, backing toward the door, her eyes filled with tears and her throat choked with fear.

"You're lucky if the Klan don't tar and feather and run you both out of town," he added with sarcasm, then pushed the door shut.

Something serious had happened to Luke! "What shall I do? What shall I do?" Florence thought frantically, as she hurried home. She recalled Luke's boasting of his power over the Indians, how often she and Wathena had been left alone, how she had tried to keep Wathena from knowing of her questionable parentage. Bitter the memory was! Frank Peterson had robbed her of the proudest thing any woman can call her own. It was a flashing stab for her even to recall the night he had sworn he loved her, promised to make her his wife,

and then forcibly betrayed her. She knew her own soul was clear, that her heart was pure. But a stricken conscience had held her in sorrow for twenty years, thinking, believing that Peterson was Wathena's father.

When she reached the doorstep of her little home, Wathena rushed out to meet her, and noting the worried expression on her face, exclaimed, "Mother, I'm all right!"

"Oh yes, my darling! You're all right, you're not hurt—thank God! But honey, what about your father? What did Jake mean? He said you would explain to me. What is it, child?"

"You have been to Hatfield, mother?"

"Yes—and he said you knew."

"I can't believe it!"

"What? What?"

"Jake says papa confessed to being a traitor, and they had taken him to jail in Opatonga City."

But even that answer was untrue. Luke Berry had been taken out of the Kozart jail at night, and had paid the penalty for his one and only act of disobedience to the Hatfield band.

A premonition of his death came to Florence. "Merciful God!" she exclaimed, and fell upon the bed.

Realizing the seriousness of her condition, Wathena telephoned to Doctor Justice, who quickly responded to the call and found that Florence was suffering from cerebral hemorrhage.

"You will be better tomorrow, mother," said Wathena, trying to smile. But her mother could not answer, and only slightly moved her head.

No improvement was shown the following day, her condition being worse instead. For several days Doctor Justice called daily, felt her pulse, and peered gravely

into her sad, distressed face. She always made a noble effort to smile when Wathena was present. For a week she lay at the point of death, and but few people came to see her. For that part, she had no friends, save a humble Indian or two, an indigent neighbor, a newsboy and Doctor Justice. And of him it could be said that, despite the rumors he had heard about Florence's life, her daughter and the knowledge he himself had of Luke, he had remained loyal throughout his few years of acquaintance with the family.

Wathena was constant in her devotion, and that seemed to suffice. It was she who was the only nurse, and she managed to keep the room filled with honeysuckle and such other flowers as she could find or afford.

A week passed, and Doctor Justice called Wathena aside one day, and asked if she knew the true status of her father.

"Only that Jake Hatfield said he had committed a crime."

"Wathena, that is not the truth," stated Justice firmly, shaking his head.

"Do you know, doctor?"

"Not for sure," was his reply, "but what I tell you, you must not repeat."

"You know you can trust me, doctor."

"I trust you, Wathena, but your mother is in no condition to stand any kind of a shock right now."

"I promise you, doctor, I will never mention it to mother," swallowing a lump in her throat. "What is it?"

"Well, I heard Tom Blackburn over the telephone, and from what I gathered between the lines, they have not only done away with your father, but also got Hickey."

"Oh, my poor father!" cried Wathena.

With tears in her eyes, she gazed through the window

at the dew-filled honeysuckle vines glistening in the sunshine. After Doctor Justice had consoled her as best he could and she had cleared the redness from her eyes, she stepped into the adjoining room to look after her mother, who slowly moved her head toward the window, bit her lips, and whispered:

"Look, darling, do you see the dove in the bush?"

"Yes, mother, I do."

"And do you see the hawk on the post?"

"Yes, mother—why?"

"He's been coming here for a week——" pausing to get her breath, then continuing, "The dove is not afraid of the hawk, and that is just what the hawk is waiting for."

Hardly had the soft words left the feeble lips before, with vicious attack, the hawk plunged down and sank its claws into the unsuspecting dove, then flew away with it.

"Look! Did you see it, Wathena?"

"Yes, mother, I saw it."

"There's a human hawk everywhere, darling. Don't trust men—few are true." Then she closed her eyes, breathing heavily.

The next day, with her pulse almost normal, her temperature subsiding, and feeling better than since she had been stricken, Florence was sitting up in bed when the telephone rang. Wathena answered it, turned and handed the receiver to her mother, and said: "Someone wants you, mother."

"Hello," Florence softly called.

"Hello, is that you, Florence?"

"Yes. Who is it?"

"Don't you know me, kid?"

"What do you mean?" asked Florence, her face ghastly pale.

"It's Frank. How are you?"

Florence stared wildly, as she choked out, "Frank! Frank who?"

"Oh, cut the comedy!" was the answer.

At the rough, mysterious voice, her throat choked, her face burned with fear and indignation. She became confused, frightened, lost in a daze. A thousand memories of the past flashed through her mind—Sunday afternoon horseback rides through the shady woods, candy pullings, and many other happy scenes of her early girlhood days back in Kentucky. Her lips quivered. Her tongue refused to move.

"It's Frank Peterson!" she murmured—the man who had deceived her twenty years ago, the father of Wathena. The telephone receiver dropped from her trembling hand. Overcome with grief, and unable to bear her trouble longer, she sank back upon the pillow.

"Mother! Mother! What is it, mother dear?" cried Wathena in alarm, as she grasped her mother's hand and pressed her cheek to the faded one as her mother whispered.

"Oh, darling, I've always tried to live right. But I cannot be with you much longer," she said pathetically, her words faltering and fading between weak sobs.

CHAPTER XXII

WATHENA telephoned to Doctor Justice again. He hastened to the Berry cottage, and when he felt Florence's pulse and took her temperature he knew the end was near. Gently he put his arm around Wathena, and whispered that her mother could not recover.

"Oh, what shall I do, doctor? I can't bear to have her leave me! She's all I have. Each day she has tried to be brave and happy, and to smile. But I know she was sad, and it was for me. She always lived and struggled for me. Please do something, doctor! Can't you keep her alive a little while longer?"

"Wathena, my dear child, I have done everything possible," he replied tenderly.

Doctor Justice glanced about the little room where hovered death, which would leave a sweet, innocent young girl on the threshold of womanhood alone and motherless. It brought tears to his own eyes. The home was small, but all was in order; crisp, clean curtains at the windows, books on the mantel, a dim blaze in the fireplace, a Bible on the table, a cottage organ in the corner of the living-room. The bed covering, though scanty, was clean. This was the way Florence had lived ever since he had known her. He tried hard to compose himself.

"You must be brave, my child—the end has come."

"Oh, I don't believe I can endure it!" Wathena cried.

The hands of the little wooden clock on the mantelpiece indicated midnight, and the weird cry of a screech-owl

perched on the branch of a tree just outside the bed-room window added to the gloom of the tragic hour. Wathena wept heart-brokenly, as she stood by her mother silently praying. Florence's eyelids moved, and she made an effort to speak.

"Mother! Mother, do you want something?"

"Wathena darling, where are you?"

"Here I am, mother dear."

"Hold my hand, darling," Florence murmured.

"I am, mother. But don't leave me, mother. Oh, please don't die, mother!"

"I am going, my child." And she made a feeble effort to hold Wathena's hand more firmly.

"No, no, mother!" sobbed Wathena.

"I am going, sweetheart. I am dying, Wathena."

"But I can't live without you, mother dear—it will be so lonely."

"Yes darling, but mother is dying——"

Wathena gazed into her pallid face, hoping, praying, pleading with God that her life be spared. "No, no!" she cried. "Mother, you must not! I can't stand it!"—becoming almost distracted as her mother's lips slowly ceased moving.

Then suddenly Florence made a feeble attempt to rise, but she had not the strength, and fell back limp on the pillow, breathing faintly and slowly. In a moment she opened her eyes, and began to whisper.

Wathena was holding one hand, Doctor Justice the other.

"Doctor, doctor," she murmured.

"Yes, Florence, I am here," he softly replied.

"Look out for my child, won't you?"

"I surely will, Florence," he promised.

"And God will bless you," she added.

"Wathena, your mother is going to leave you now, Won't you play once more on the organ for me?"

"Yes, mother dear."

"And kiss me, daughter, once more."

Wathena tenderly kissed her and, placing her cheek against her mother's, said, "Mother, oh mother, I love you! Don't die!"

"But God has called me, and I want you to play once more for me."

"What shall I play, mother?"

"The Rosary."

Struggling to control the deep grief which made her throat ache and her fingers tremble, Wathena went to the organ and played softly the music her mother had requested. As she finished the first few bars she glanced back and saw a faint smile come over Florence's face, but a moment later there was a deathlike rattle in her throat, accompanied by slow breathing, and from her lips came a soft whisper. Then Florence Berry's eyes closed, her breathing stopped.

Wathena rushed to the bedside as Doctor Justice folded her mother's arms across her breast. Then he telephoned to his wife, who came and spent the remainder of the night with Wathena.

The following morning Wathena tried to telephone Roger, but was informed by the office boy that he was out of the city. Next she endeavored to reach Jake Hatfield, but he refused to answer the telephone, so she sent him a written message, pleading that he get word to her father of her mother's death. When he received the note, he merely scanned the contents, tore it into a dozen pieces, and threw it into the waste basket. "Luke's where you can't get word to him," he said to himself with a twisted smile.

At noon the following day Roger returned to Kozart, learned through Doctor Justice of Florence Berry's death, and also that neither Hickey nor Luke Berry had been found.

Although election day was near at hand, and in spite of the fact that Coleman could not afford to have anyone see him in the Berry home, his love for Wathena meant more to him than all other considerations, and as soon as Doctor Justice told him the pathetic news he rushed out to offer condolence and aid. To his surprise, when he reached the home, only Wathena and an Indian were there. The doctor's wife had remained with Wathena during the night, but realizing that she had a daughter to get off to school, Wathena insisted that she go home, assuring her that she could get along all right. After Mrs. Justice departed the Indian appeared. He came, in, attended to the fire, then retired to the yard, where he remained standing in stolid patience, near the rear of the house.

At first glance Coleman recognized Chuckwood, the Kozart hermit, who for years had lived near the mysterious ghost farm. Any effort to get the Indian to talk had always been futile, for he only stared or nodded his head to any question asked him.

"I'm so sorry, dear, about your mother's death," Coleman said sympathetically, taking Wathena's cold little hands in his. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"That is very kind of you, Roger, but I don't believe there is anything you can do. It is too terrible—my heart is broken. I just can't think—my mind seems a blank."

"You will be all right, Wathena. Remember, God has called her. She is in a better world. We must all go. Now, brace up—you must."

"Well, I will try, Roger."

"Where will the services be held?"

"I believe Doctor Justice has arranged for services here, for that was mother's wish. She often said that when she died she wanted services in her home." Wathena's eyes were filled with tears, but she was bearing up bravely under the shock and strain.

"Do you know the hour, Wathena?"

"Yes—ten o'clock tomorrow morning."

"I will be here, dear. And, hard as it may be for you to understand, our love must be kept a secret for the present, and we will show no feeling toward each other."

Wathena did not understand. There was a lump in her throat, but she nodded her head, and said brokenly, "Yes, I know."

Her young soul was stricken by the combined sorrow of her mother's death, her lack of knowledge of her father's fate, and her bewilderment over the secrecy always insisted upon by Roger. She wondered, too, whose was the mysterious voice that had called her mother over the telephone, which had caused Florence to faint.

Doctor Justice had arranged for the funeral services, a local minister to read the rites, and a music teacher to play the organ. He also telephoned a notice to the editor of the *Kozart Herald*, giving the hour and date when the funeral would be held. Hatfield's group, of course, had no semblance of sympathy, and the occasion once more revealed the leader's depraved mind.

Jake heard Doctor Justice telephone the notice to the newspaper, so he took this opportunity to stage another of his heartless acts. He went to his office, and, finding Claud Hood awaiting him, had Hood call Tate Wheeler over the telephone.

"Jake says block that funeral notice."

"I don't get you, Claud."

"That notice about Florence Berry's death. Make it

read that she's buried already, or change the funeral hour, and I'll phone the music teacher and throw her off, too."

"What's the idea?" inquired Wheeler.

"Jake's word is law. Don't ask me, Tate. I guess it's because Roger has been calling to see Edna.

"Going to press right away," Wheeler declared.

"I get you. I'll make it read two p.m., instead of ten o'clock in the morning."

"Great!" exclaimed Hood.

When the *Herald* was delivered the following morning, the few people who through sympathy wished to attend the funeral services were misled. They tried to telephone Wathena, but Central reported the line out of order. Efforts to reach the City Drug Store met a similar response, for Hatfield had given orders that the telephone wires be cut.

When ten o'clock arrived, neither the pall-bearers, the minister nor the music teacher appeared. Instead, only Doctor Justice, his wife, four of their intimate friends, Chuckwood the Indian, a newsboy whom Florence had befriended, and Roger Coleman were present.

Coleman's heart leaped to his throat when he realized the situation, and instinctively understood the cause. But courageously he arose and said: "This is a sad moment for us all. I cannot render music, but I'll pay tribute to Mrs. Berry."

The body had been placed in a black casket, with silver handles and silver trimmings. On its top lay a wreath of American Beauty roses, and at the head a large cluster of other flowers was banked against the wall. Only Coleman and Justice had sent such tributes, and it was the doctor who furnished the beautiful casket.

Stepping near the casket, and looking down upon the dead face of Wathena's mother, Coleman seemed inspired

with a divine power to express himself, to utter words that only a minister of years of experience could ordinarily have spoken.

As he finished the first eulogy he had ever given, to the surprise of the few present and adding a pathetic touch to the incident, Wathena stepped over to the little organ, and softly, with trembling fingers and quivering lips, she played and sang her mother's favorite hymn:

“Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee,
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be
Nearer, my God, to Thee;
Nearer, my God, to Thee; nearer to Thee.”

She put into it a feeling that was brave and touching, but as she finished the last verse and stepped over to get a final glimpse of her mother's face, she seemed about to faint, and had to be assisted to the waiting car to be conveyed to the cemetery.

Touched by Wathena's grief and Coleman's eulogy, Mrs. Justice invited Wathena to spend the night with her. She accepted, but, overcome with sorrow, at the break of dawn she disappeared from the home and returned to the lonely cottage in which her mother had passed away.

From the kitchen to the bedroom Wathena wandered back and forth throughout the day. Only Coleman, Doctor Justice and some of his friends called to offer comfort. When darkness crept on it began to rain. The lonely girl sat with her face buried in her hands, while slow tears trickled through her fingers, her mother's voice and her sweet smile vividly present in her mind.

Presently she answered a knock at the front door, and was handed a letter by a messenger boy. It read:

"DEAR WATHENA:

We may search the ocean deep for beautiful pearls, we may toil for the glitter of gold until our hands are worn and our hearts are cold; but we will never bring forth a gem that compares with a mother's love. My own mother is gone—I knew so little of her that I can scarcely remember how she looked. God knows that memory is sweet and deep, yet I have never had the care, the love, the tender caress of a mother, but had to be content with life alone. It has been a struggle, and that is the more reason I care for you, and my heart goes out to you tonight. In the hour of your deepest sorrow, may God aid you. And Wathena, trust me, and remain silent. Some day you will understand. Please destroy this letter.

"THE MAN WHO CARES."

Wathena knew it was from Coleman, and for a moment she sat thinking of those loving words, and the tender kiss the night she had danced with Coleman at the pow-wow.

Slowly and sadly she crept to her bed. It was the first night she had ever been alone. She thought it pitiful that her father had not been present at her mother's funeral, and the conviction grew upon her that he, too, must be dead. She turned the covers back and tried to undress, but was too weak. She fell upon the bed, buried her head in the pillow, and pulled the quilt over her body. Everything came back to her—the many sacrifices her mother had made, days when she had played with her in the garden, how hard Florence had worked keeping their little home immaculate, cleaning stoves, scrubbing the floors, washing dishes, preparing their simple meals. She remembered the fall and winter months, when her mother was always waiting on the porch or seated at the window, with open arms to greet her. No matter when or where she went, on her return her mother was always waiting. And now she would wait no more.

"Oh mother, mother! I miss you so! Oh mother, won't you come back to me?" she sobbed.

After a sleepless night, in the early morning Wathena raised the window shade, and the bright sunshine streamed into the room. She looked out at the honeysuckle that her mother had so dearly loved, and for a moment it seemed as if she could see her mother's fingers moving near the two tiny humming-birds which were flitting through the vine.

The days that followed were sad and lonely. Only a few people called to see her, and Roger Coleman remained away. Her mother had carried a small insurance policy on her life, and by careful skimping and saving she had managed to keep up the payments. The policy was promptly paid, and from this source the mortgage on the house was cancelled, and Wathena's living was supplied for the time being. Of her father's fate she learned nothing more.

Where such a type as the Hatfield group of men rule, following a death or an incident in which they had had a part, their spotters and stool pigeons take note of every move made by anyone else. This was the chief reason for Wathena's almost total isolation from any of the people she knew. However, there was no suspicion aroused by Doctor Justice's aiding her, as, for more than a year, she had been his employee.

Roger, however, dared do nothing to interfere with the successful completion of the mission on which he had been sent by Captain Mitchell. He was tactful and masterful, never hurried, no matter how intently he was concentrating or toiling on any case. He wanted the evidence to be accurate and complete, and single-handed he was unravelling crimes, which he knew—once before the public in proper form—would resound throughout the state, ac-

claim him the hero of the old Nations, and, most of all, would bring delayed justice to the Indians.

"What's become of the *Air Mail* editor?" queried Claud Hood of Coleman some days later, as they met at the City Drug Store.

"Got too hot for him, I guess," replied Coleman.

"He was only a government dog," jeered Blackburn.

"They don't tarry long here," Massey added as he joined them.

"Yes, and old Luke got his, too," continued Blackburn.

"What! Luke Berry!" Coleman exclaimed.

"Sure. Didn't you know? It looks like that strumpet gal would have told you all about it."

"What do you mean?" asked Coleman.

"That girl—Wathena. She ain't Luke's kid."

For a moment Coleman's blood boiled. It was almost beyond his endurance to hear the girl he loved spoken of in this manner, but he knew he must not betray his interest in her, nor his resentment. He forced himself to say stoically, "Well, I suppose Luke deserved whatever happened to him."

"Someone was tellin' me you knew the *Air Mail* editor," Massey said.

"I?" queried Coleman.

"Yes, that's what they're sayin' around town."

"Ever hear of a frog wearing suspenders?" Coleman asked humorously.

"No—not in Kozart," Hood replied.

"Well, that's about the way you can refer to my knowledge of him," was Coleman's reply.

"Blackburn says you wear a badge," Hood persisted.

"I do," Coleman answered,—“a monocule badge.”

"What kind?"

"A monocule."

"What's that?"

"Did you ever hear of the Monocule Club?"

"No."

"Well, it protects me from cantharides."

And thus Coleman laughed and freely discussed the disappearance of Hickey and Berry, as would anyone who had no interest in either of them.

The futility of hunting Hickey was a foregone conclusion, for the Hatfield group had either run him out of the state or killed him, and Roger suspected he had been accorded the same treatment as others who stood in the way of the swindlers.

Daily he thought of Florence Berry's death, the pathetic scene at the funeral fresh in his mind, and his love for Wathena growing. Yet he dared not see her, write, or telephone in such a way as to expose his love. The situation at the present time was too precarious, and he must redouble his caution. As for that part, he let Hatfield think his attendance at the funeral was merely an impersonal, friendly act, and he continued to call on Hatfield's daughter.

Other investigators were now openly trying to find Doc Hickey, while Coleman went about his oil business, apparently unconcerned.

One day, to his surprise and delight, Doctor Justice told him that he and his wife were leaving the following Sunday for a trip to Colorado, and that they would take Wathena. Also that Wathena wanted to see and talk with Roger before she left, and the doctor had suggested they meet in Opatonga City.

"Tell her I'll be there," said Coleman, greatly pleased.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN the mysterious softness of a balmy fall night, when a virgin moon flickered behind the protection of fleecy clouds, Roger met Wathena in Opatonga City the evening she was starting for the trip.

As she ascended the steps to the mezzanine floor of the Wanumbra Hotel and greeted him with a smile, his whole impulse was to kiss her, in spite of the people about them, for she thrilled him as no other woman had ever done. Wathena raised her long-lashed blue eyes and looked at him intently, and when she spoke it was in a fluttering voice.

"I can't understand. I try, but I can't understand you, and I am so unhappy. I want to go away. Sometimes I think it best that we never meet again."

"But darling, what do you mean?" he asked, as he put his arms around her and suddenly kissed her, despite the presence of Doctor Justice standing near by. Wathena shrank back.

"Oh, I am sorry, Wathena! Please forgive me. But I love you," he said firmly as the doctor walked away.

"Yes, of course I will forgive you. But I certainly do not understand you, Roger—that's all," she whispered.

They went down to the dining-room, and by a peculiar coincidence were seated at the same table where he had first talked with Edna Hatfield.

After a meal which neither more than tasted they went up to the Justice's suite, in which Wathena was to spend the hours preceding her departure for Colorado.

"You are so strange, Roger," she said again.

"You will understand it all some day, Wathena. And I'm so glad you're going to the Rockies. The heavy snows will soon be falling and the mountain streams roaring; but the caves and rugged scenery in Colorado are beautiful beyond description. You will enjoy it all. I want you to write me every day, but do not address my letters to Kozart."

"How shall I address you?"

"Send them to Arthur Davis, General Delivery, Opatonga. And do not mention my name in any line."

"But why such mystery, Roger?"

"Don't ask me, dear. Just remember that I love you, and if you love me, remain silent as the Sphinx."

"But such suspense is terrible, Roger."

"I know it, dear; but it cannot be helped."

"You won't explain?"

"I can't, dear. I know you are consumed with sorrow and worry over your mother's death; your heart is heavy, and perhaps you distrust. But I love you, Wathena, from the depths of my soul, and you must be brave and believe in me."

"Won't you write to me?"

"Yes, I will write to you, darling."

"Every day?"

"No, sweetheart—only when I am here, and I shall be over here only once while you are away." Hearing the rattle of keys in the door, Coleman took Wathena in his arms for a farewell kiss.

When Doctor Justice entered, he said, "We have only thirty minutes to get to the train."

"I am ready," returned Wathena.

"Goodbye. I hope you all have a pleasant trip. I know you will enjoy it," Coleman said.

They all bade him farewell, and he departed, returning to Kozart, more than ever determined to carry on his work at the cost of any deception in his relations with Edna Hatfield.

In manner of dress Edna had for years given a great deal of time and thought to methods she might employ to enhance her attractiveness. She knew vertical lines slenderize the figure, and that tapering lines of hosiery meeting in a point above the heel make the ankle look more graceful and shapely. As for hats, she had many—one for each party, club affair, dinner dance or sport. She wore the faultlessly proper shades, combinations and designs, complete to the scarf, shawl and handkerchiefs, which marked her as in the height of fashion for any occasion.

On this Saturday evening, when Coleman arrived at the Hatfield home, he was ushered into the luxurious living-room, and presently, through the mirror in the reception hall, he saw the reflection of Edna's graceful figure as she descended the stairway. Again he recalled what Chief Bearskin had said: "Hatfield's daughter is very shrewd. But win her, and you win the fight."

It seemed to Coleman that never before had she appeared so charming or so beautiful. She wore an exquisite pink chiffon gown, with hose and slippers to match, and when she carelessly flung her sinuous body down into the deep-cushioned divan, she was a picture calculated to arouse passion of any man. Her coal-black hair, which seemed to accentuate the delicacy of her pale, ivory skin, was parted in the center and pierced with the large diamond comb she always wore. She had poise, beauty—everything a man might desire.

"Hello dear," she said sweetly. "Come and sit here with me."

Coleman seated himself beside her, and her warm, palpitating body pressing closely against his own was luring, as she registered a tantalizing little kiss upon his lips. "How are you tonight, Edna?" he finally found voice to say, as she released her bare arms from an embrace to which he did not respond, but accepted quietly.

"Hundred per cent," she assured him.

"You certainly look beautiful tonight."

"You really think so?" she asked coquettishly.

"Words fail me," Coleman replied, and he meant it.

She moved nearer to him on the divan and began twisting her beautiful body in an "I-dare-you manner," hungry for response. Her black eyes had fascinated and captivated many men, and Coleman pondered: "God has been good to her—physically, mentally and financially. But at the same time, she has nothing to do but eat, dress and amuse herself and her friends. She has never known a moment of sincerity since the day she was born, and the luxury which she enjoys is gained by the methods which have brought struggle, misery and death to the Indians, and many others—Wathena included."

"Why so sad?" Edna began.

"Sad! Never," Coleman returned.

"Then what is the matter?"

"Nothing."

"You are not fooling me any, dear," in a crooning tone of voice, meant to beguile. "You are not just yourself tonight."

"Well, it's just this, Edna. I sometimes think I should not be here. You are so beautiful, so charming; and your wealth——"

"Oh, go on, dear. I just love to hear you say those things."

"But our stations in life are so different."

"Now, there you are again!"

"Well, am I not right?"

"Certainly not. You are just filled with idealistic absurdity."

"But Edna, some day you will find someone you really like, and you will marry."

"What if I do? That need not break our friendship."

"But I don't believe in that kind of friendship. When two people marry, they should be true to the marriage vows, and not indulge in promiscuous affairs."

"Oh nonsense! Don't be silly."

"You think me silly?"

"Yes. It's perfectly ridiculous. Because a woman marries is no reason why she should go into a shell and dry up to satisfy some old foggy husband who preaches to his wife about morality, then fondles his office girl every time he has the opportunity."

"You are a dangerously fascinating woman, Edna, and the more I am with you, the more my feeling grows. I do like you, and you know it," he said, as he purposely looked dejected.

"You get a kiss for that, darling," she said, as she squeezed his arm and pressed her warm lips against his, and then buried her head on his shoulder in an affectionate manner.

Coleman merely continued calmly: "You have so many friends, Edna."

"What of it? They mean nothing to me except amusement."

"And I?"

"Oh honey, you are so different. Sometimes I find myself pursuing you, and I break off and swear I'll never see you again; then when I do see you I want to be near you." She added after a moment, "I could get any man I wanted."

"Anyone "

"Yes, anyone. You—if I made up my mind to it."

"But you would not want to win a man who did not love you."

"Love me? Say, they all fall for a pretty woman, and I am no piece of cheese," she said, a little cynically.

"Oh, I admit you are beautiful, Edna."

"And dad will give me all the money I want."

"But money isn't everything in the world."

"Well, it gets you there, just the same," she retorted.

"The pathway to success and happiness is in serving humanity, and not worshiping the almighty dollar. Had you ever thought of that?"

"Did you ever try vaudeville, Roger?"

"Why do you ask?"

"You'd make such a wonderful actor."

"Oh, I'm immune to sarcasm, Edna."

"But can't you take a joke, dear?"

"You didn't mean it that way."

"Oh now, don't become cynical, sweetheart," she said, as she gently patted him on the arm, and then gazed at him passionately. "You know I care for you, and you mustn't feel hurt when I jolly you."

Coleman observed the time by his watch, and said: "I must run along. It's getting late."

"Then I shall see you tomorrow?"

"I have to go to Shatoga tomorrow."

"Then Monday night?"

"I shall not be back until about noon Friday, and would be very happy to come out that night."

"Surely dear," and she put her arms around his neck, and kissed him goodnight.

As Coleman went to his apartment he began to visualize as he had never done before the life she lived, her promiscuous flirtations and indiscretions, her boldness and

her cleverness. When she found him uninterested, she sometimes affected a bursting headache, that his fingers might glide about her forehead to ease the pain. More than once she had pretended hunger, or thirst, or made it appear she needed fresh air when with a crowd, that he might—and usually did—suggest a place where they could go and be alone.

To him Edna's idiosyncrasies were incredible, for she had the advantages that make for refinement. At times she was not only indecorous and impertinent, but insolent; yet at other times she possessed poise and displayed a complexity that was baffling to explain. However, back of all her selfishness, her self-centered nature and her ruthless disregard for the rights of others was one answer—ancestry. She was her father's daughter—a true Hatfield.

"Defy God! Scoff at ideals! Disobey laws!" That was the Hatfield code.

But nothing must impede his investigations. And as Coleman saw it now, Edna Hatfield really admired him for the stand he took on life. So long as he could retain her respect by clever ruse, this might prevent her father's further suspicion of him. And, despite her evident desire to lay her body and soul at his feet, he resolved to continue the daring and tantalizing evenings, in order to accomplish his end.

CHAPTER XXIV

COLEMAN left the next day for Shatoga, and a day or two later went on to Opatonga City. When he entered Arthur Davis' office, Davis handed him a letter. The purity of Wathena's soul, the essence of sincerity was in every line.

"DEAR:

"Here I am, way up on the mountains above Manitou. I have always longed to come here, and while I hated to leave Kozart, yet after mother's death the house seemed so dreary that I just had to get away. The crisp October air, the beautiful lakes and the tall majestic pines, the rocks, Pike's peak, the Garden of the Gods, and the Royal Gorge—all seem to instill new life into me. I know I ought to stay here, for it's doing me good, but I am so anxious to see you that I want to come home. Somehow I feel you need me.

"We are put into the world to help and make others happy. And why cannot everyone imitate the morning birds that wake up with songs of love? Or the modest little violet that peeps out of the ground to bring its share of cheer, bearing its bit of bright blossom?

"It makes me sad when I think of papa, and of my darling mother's death. But I have promised the Lord that if He will only let me live and just be happy, I will try to show my gratitude. He never made us to go around with long faces or unhappy hearts. After all, only those who are really good are truly happy, don't you think so? The thief or the murderer cannot be happy until he atones and makes his peace with God.

"I don't know why I am writing you such a letter, except that I have known so much trouble and tears; and up here on the mountainside I watch the birds, the squirrels, and listen to the murmuring and trickling waters, and it seems I am nearer God

and nature than I have ever been before. And I want you to have faith in me, dear, because I love you, and do want to trust you. You have kept me waiting and wondering and saying that some day you would tell me everything—and I know you will. And just remember your lonesome girl out here in Colorado is longing for you, and will soon be back and call you when you let me.

WATHENA."

As Coleman finished reading the letter, he turned to Davis, who was sitting near. "Do you know, Arthur, this girl has a smile that would wipe the wrinkles out of any Indian's face."

"Yes?" said Davis, as he grinned.

"Where's your typewriter?" Coleman asked.

"Next room. Help yourself," Davis replied, pointing toward his private office. Coleman went into the room, sat down and wrote:

"DEAREST WATHENA:

"Your letter came like a soft zephyr from a garden of roses. Just like you, sweetheart—purity in every word. Each hour and each day until you return will seem long and weary. It is almost incredible to me that you really care for me, when I think that out of that wild confusion and the way we met at the pow-wow we should have both seen, desired and grasped a peerless flower of love, and each discovered the heart of the other. With me, of course, it was love from the first day I ever saw you. And my heart aches that I cannot talk freely and explain why I am so strange at times. You inspire me to do big things, to make money, to make others happy, to do noble deeds, and never to think of a selfish act. This alone is proof of a love that only death can part, and even then I know we will meet in a higher and better world. I long for the day when I can take you in my arms and tell you everything. But until then you must trust me. I know you will, because I love you, Wathena, as dearly as your mother did. I am lonely and I miss you, but I am happy that you are enjoying Colorado. Yes dear, I knew you would, and you will come back feeling refreshed—of that I am sure.

Each day I long to see you, each day my love increases, and each day is drawing nearer to the hour when you will understand. Always,

"THE MAN WHO CARES."

On the day of his return to Kozart, Edna stepped into her dressing-room, and from the chifferobe took a mirror, then picked up Coleman's picture. As she studied his features, a look of deep yearning impressed her delicate face, and with an impulsive gesture she murmured softly, "He's a virgin man. But tonight—tonight, I say—I must make a deperate effort. Dad says he believes him to be a government dog. I must win him! Tonight—tonight I will!"

She dressed with unusual care for the evening, and a tantalizing picture she made as she descended the stairs and entered the room in which Coleman waited. She was attired in a gorgeous gown of seal-like black satin, which clung tightly to her perfect form, and revealed nature's charms in every curve of her body. Around her throat she wore a strand of sparkling diamonds, and in her raven-black hair the royal comb.

"I am glad to see you, Roger," she said as she approached him and placed her arm around his neck, leaning toward him, lips quivering, and her fair, white, beautiful breast rising and falling with intensity. His physical senses leaped, he was confused and tormented. Her eyes gleamed with tantalizing passion. How stunning she was! In spite of himself, she aroused a keen desire within him. "No one would ever know," came the evil thought. "But I must not think of it! I must dispel the idea!"

"Tonight is my night—yes, tonight!" Edna Hatfield murmured to herself. "I'll get him—all men are alike."

For the first time in her presence Roger Coleman ac-

tually felt himself slipping, as he stammered out, "You—you are wonderful!"

"Won't you take a cocktail with me?"

"No, thank you, Edna."

"But do drink with me. It's my birthday—won't you take one with me, please?—just one?" she persisted, and purposely swerved her body so that he might gaze upon her exposed back and perfect form.

But Coleman only smiled and said, "I never drink. In fact, it goes to my head."

Goes to his head!

"I'll get him drunk," she thought. "That's just what I will do! I'll get him to drink—I'll win him!—I will! I will!"

"Oh," she said aloud. "I did not tell you dad had a Chinese mystery-cabinet installed in his bedroom."

"Is he at home?" Roger asked.

"You mean the Chinaman?"

"Certainly not—I mean your father."

"No. He's spending the night in Shatoga."

Dubious, but curious, Coleman said, "I never saw a mystery-cabinet. What is it like?"

"A secret narceine den and dad's new kelavator."

"I'll bite. What is it?" he quizzed.

"Don't you really know?"

"No, I do not."

She enjoyed using a word that she concocted, or one that was not in common use.

"Well," she said, "narceine means—what you don't like. But I'll show you where dad keeps it." Then they entered her father's bedroom.

"All right. Let's see the Chinaman."

"It's no live man, dear—only a Chinese invention," Edna said, then pressed an electric button. A revolving

panel in the wall opened, a small cabinet appeared, electrically operated, and a table came out and stood on the floor. By a contrivance of levers, wheels and automatic hinges, glasses, napkins, spoons and bottles of liquor were properly placed. Even a plate of ice appeared.

"It's a Chinese mystery all right," Roger said as he examined it and stood gazing curiously at the contortions of the uncanny apparatus.

"Surely you will take one drink with me on my birthday—just one, a tiny one. Please, dear!"

Absolutely temperate, yet willing to take a drink if the incident promoted evidence, and thinking if she indulged freely she might become loquacious and relate things about her father, Hickey or Luke Berry, Coleman said, "Only with you will I ever touch a drop."

"And a kiss for that," she said, as she gently touched his cheek with her crimson lips. Then she picked up the filled glasses, and turning to him, said, "To the most wonderful man in the world."

He noticed that there was a slight difference in the color of the liquor in the two glasses. More than once he had seen how a clever woman deceives and dopes a man, and he was not to be fooled so easily.

Smiling at her, he returned, "And to the most beautiful woman in the world. But it's luck to change glasses," he added, and reached for the one she held.

"Oh, they're both alike!"

"But it's luck to exchange," he persisted, not knowing that she had anticipated his thoughts, and purposely created suspicion so that he would insist upon the exchange and would drink the contents which she had prepared for him.

"Oh, you are not superstitious, are you?"

"Not at all, Edna," he replied.

"Well, the glasses are alike,"—carrying out her little game.

"But it's luck to exchange," he argued, "and bad luck if we don't."

Edna pushed herself away, as though annoyed by his persistence, and Coleman fell into her clever trap. Hardly had she assented to the exchange, and he had emptied the contents of the glass, when he realized that she had given him an aphrodisiac. He sat down upon the soft, luxurious bed, his body rocking with a wild, uncontrollable passion; and to further fan the tantalizing emotion, Edna pressed her warm, scantily clad, undulating body between his knees, and kissed him passionately.

The control he had always possessed suddenly snapped. Something was driving him mad, wild, and his swiftly beating heart pounded against the walls of his conscience.

Shortly afterward he went back to his apartment.

Wondering if she would ever understand Roger, and dressed in her most charming afternoon frock, her nails pink as a freshly plucked rosebud, the day following the "night of nights" Edna stepped into her red sport roadster and drove down town, slipping into the bank, through the stress of her father's chaotic office, with the imperturbability of a goldfish in a bowl. And from the bank she telephoned to Coleman's office.

"Is Mr. Coleman in?"

"No, he has just stepped downstairs."

"Thank you," she replied. And since her car was parked near the steps which led to the second floor of the bank building, she hastened out and entered her machine just as Coleman reached the sidewalk. "Hello," she called, waving her hand.

"How do you do, Edna?" he replied.

"Oh, I am so ashamed of last night," she said demurely, as he stepped up near her car.

"Why, Edna?"

"Let's not talk about it. If dad ever found it out, he'd kill me."

"Found out what?" Roger asked, with a grave but enigmatical expression.

"Oh, you know what I mean."

"So, that's her game!" Coleman thought. He reflected again upon the letter Gordon Haines once wrote to him about the "she-devil," and he felt sure Edna Hatfield was that woman. If so, Haines certainly had known what he was writing about, for he could see now, even more than heretofore, the trouble she could bring upon a man. But Coleman was willing to take the consequences for any act of his own. Patting Edna's hand and smiling, he said, "Oh, everything will be all right. Don't worry, Edna."

"I am leaving tonight for Watoy to visit friends. Don't you want to join me, Roger?" she asked complacently.

"How long will you be away?"

"Several days."

"I shall miss you, Edna."

"Really, hon?"

"Yes," he said.

But Edna did not know the real meaning of his answer, as she drove away feeling that at last he was within her power.

On the day Edna left for Watoy, Wathena returned to Kozart. She saw Roger in close conversation with Edna, and apparently—at least she thought entirely too much so—contented and happy in her society. Within an hour after Edna had driven out of Kozart a messenger boy brought a note to Coleman.

"DEAR SIR:

"I saw you with her, and my heart is bursting. You are no better than all other men. I am going back to Colorado, and shall never see you again. Goodbye—WATHENA."

Coleman was desperate, and tried to telephone Wathena from a private booth, but when she heard his voice she was so confused and distressed that she refused to talk. That night he risked everything, and went to her home. When he arrived, Wathena's feelings underwent a complete change, so happy was she to see him, and, forgetting her resolution never to speak to him again, she threw her arms about him and wept.

"I missed you, Wathena, more than you will ever know," he assured her.

"But you seemed so interested in Miss Hatfield, it hurt me, Roger."

"Trust me—that's all, Wathena. You would not understand if I told you. Edna is harmless, and besides she means absolutely nothing to me."

"But I simply cannot understand."

"My darling girl, you will understand some day, and it will make you happy. Now, I don't want you to worry, nor must you write or telephone me. And if you can't trust me—then I am sorry."

"But what are you doing, Roger? It all seems so strange to me."

"I can't explain now."

"Are you trying to sell her oil leases?"

"Perhaps."

Wathena was no different from any other woman who loves. She trusted him, and she distrusted him, which of course meant both gladness and sadness.

"Promise me, sweetheart, that you will not worry."

"I will try hard," she replied softly.

Then Coleman kissed her tenderly, adding, "If you write to me again, slip the note to me when I come to the drug store and pay my check."

"I won't write you again."

"Just trust me, that's all I ask, Wathena." Then he departed, fortunately no one seeing him either enter or leave the Berry home.

Feeling that he was about to reach the apex of his investigation, blue over Wathena's attitude, and realizing that Hickey's disappearance would prove a blow to the plans Chief Bearskin had agreed to aid him in, Coleman was sad and mentally exhausted as he went home that evening.

Wathena distrusting!

Edna pursuing! Perhaps growing vindictive!

The Hatfield group becoming suspicious!

What did the future hold?

CHAPTER XXV

THE next day information reached Roger Coleman which was destined to be the real beginning of an incident that would aid his long, tedious and persistent investigation, and perpetually seal his friendship with every Indian in the Kozart country.

It was Chuckwood, the Indian hermit, who brought him the news. Chuckwood, like Doc Hickey, was tall and thin, with sharp cheekbones and long black hair. He would look, listen, stare, and shake his head, close his eyes, and in this peculiar way say yes or no in all dealings he had with those he met. He lived in a tent on the small tract of barren land he owned, on which also was the mysterious farm where ghosts had appeared.

Claud Hood was the only man who claimed to have heard the hermit ever speak a word, and that was in the early nineties. All Hood could relate was that in the year the Kozart Nation was thrown open "Sooners" passing through shot and killed Chuckwood's squaw and six children, and that he went away and did not return for a long while. Some people thought that Chuckwood followed the attackers, killed them and returned to his stamping-ground, while others reported he had waited all these years, with a loaded gun in his tent, thinking the "Sooners" would return. But no one ever ventured near his place.

The term "Sooners" was applied to tricky men, who, prior to the hour that opened the Indian country to settlement of the whites, slipped into the nation and hid out

near a section of land they desired to file on, and, despite a barrage of soldiers who were on the borders of the land, many succeeded.

Chuckwood's tent had been erected on the extreme point of a narrow strip of land, where two deep, wide gulches met, and the only entrance was by passing near the mystery house, which no one had dared to enter in years. Those who had seen the Indian near his tent said that a white horse with a long, shaggy mane and tail, and a shepherd dog with long hair and sleepy eyes were his only companions.

It was known that herbs, bark and nuts were his food. But each Christmas for many years, Chuckwood had been the joy of the children in Kozart, because he gave them beaded bags, trinkets and little toys that he had made during the year.

Among the Indian's idiosyncrasies was his monophanous attire during the two contrasting seasons of the year. He always wore buckskin trousers, and in the spring he covered his body above the waist with a coat of leaves, on which he spread some kind of oil which kept the leaves bright and green; while in the winter months he wore a fur-lined coat, the outside of which was covered with grass and straw.

Coleman's information came mysteriously. One morning when he got out of bed he spied a note on the floor near the door, and picking it up read:

"We-ah, Ku-e-lo, De-ah, Tee-he, Nom-baugh, He-ne."

"Osage language," Coleman assured himself. "Let me see—We-ah means me, Ku-e-lo means come, De-ah means you, Tee-he means house, Nom-baugh means two, and He-ne means night. 'Me come your house two o'clock tonight.'" He readily perceived the meaning, but was somewhat concerned about there being no signature. "But

who is this man? What does he want? Is this a ruse by some of the Hatfield bunch?"

Coleman pondered throughout the day over the anonymous message, but that night, at exactly two o'clock, when the city was in darkness and the inhabitants sound asleep, Chuckwood knocked at Coleman's door. Coleman opened it, and the Indian stepped into his room, saying, "Me white man's friend. Me find dead man."

Having thought the Indian deaf and dumb, and amazed at hearing his voice, Coleman looked at him somewhat apprehensively. "It may be a ruse to get me out of town and end my career," he thought. "Are you sure, Chuckwood, it's a man's body?" he asked.

"Come—you see. Indian never tell lies," was Chuckwood's reply.

"But you might be mistaken."

"No, heap Indian never mistake."

"Where is the body, and how did you come to see it?"

"You see, me horse heap get lost. Me hunt horse, heap grass, heap woods, heap vine, heap wood. See man's head stick up in sack. Big bird try open sack. Me go see, make big bird go way. Chuckwood find horse, too."

"But where?" Coleman persisted.

"Bad place—old house—white man know."

"You mean the mysterious thicket and ghost house near your place?"

"Yes. White man don't know all."

"About what?" queried Coleman.

"Ghost house bad—heap people think—all joke to Chuckwood."

"Have you been there before?"

"Heap times. Chuckwood go get horse—heap grapevines, heap roots, heap herbs—me eat."

"What kind of a place is the ghost house?"

"Chuckwood say heap bad place for white man, heap big hole in ground. White man use at night—ghost. All joke—only white man ways. Heap bad."

Coleman pondered, for wild were the rumors of the ghost farm and house. Merrymakers returning from joyrides, or Indian dances, within the past week, reported that weird figures had been seen wearing shields, helmets, and carrying lights. The place was a mass of vines, prickly weeds and thorny underbrush, and to penetrate the thicket would be hazardous. Besides this, the two gulches prevented easy passageway to the forest, for they almost encircled it.

The forest itself was in the shape of the letter V. Once, old-timers said, the land upon which it stood was as level as a floor, but many dry sultry summers had created great cracks in the ground, and heavy winter rains washed them deeper and wider, and made them dangerous, for their banks were nothing but crumbling ledges which continually broke off and fell away. Near the widest end of the ghostly forest lay the deepest and steepest banks of the gulch. The Kozart county road ran by it, and just beyond the road, opposite the forest, was the ranch home of Tom Blackburn, who claimed the distinction of being the first to discover the ghostly place.

Observing the frankness and apparent sincerity with which Chuckwood had expressed himself, yet mindful of the Indian's secluded and almost hermit life, Coleman bit his lip and looked intently at Chuckwood, as he said, "Are you a friend of the white man, Chuckwood?"

"No! Me no believe white man."

Coleman gazed out of the window in meditation. "Is this a bait to lure and assassinate me? Is his story true? If there is a dead man there, has the body been planted there for a purpose? Why has this Indian come to me?"

he asked himself. "Let me see—Chuckwood says he lost his horse, and was hunting him—that sounds plausible. Then, too, I've always heard Chuckwood was deaf and dumb. He seldom leaves his place. Who sent him here? —I'll try him on an Indian sign." On second thought, he murmured, "No, no, that won't do. That would give me away."

He thought a moment longer.

"What if the story be true and the body so decomposed as to be unrecognizable? My going would not accomplish anything."

Turning and facing the Indian, he asked abruptly, "Who sent you here, Chuckwood?"

The Indian stiffened and asked hoarsely, "Good white man no trust Indian?"

"Well, it's not that, Chuckwood. But you see, I'm not an officer, and I can't understand why you came to tell me about the dead man."

"Chuckwood have good cause."

"But that does not answer my question. Why don't you go to the police station and tell Claud Hood?"

The name of Hood seemed to anger the Indian, and his aged and wrinkled face flamed in resentment. His red squint-eyes opened wide. His posture became that of a youth of twenty, he raised his left hand to his chin, and with his thumb and two forefingers closed he nodded his head and uttered, "Akosa-fa"—"distrustful."

"But you trust me?"

"Yes, heap Indian always trust good white man."

"And you are sure what you saw was the body of a man?" Coleman persisted.

Chuckwood wheeled around, stepped over, and turned the key in the door which led to Coleman's bedroom; then pulling his grass coat back and pointing to the marks of

an arrow over his heart, a turtle, frog and circle beneath his right arm, exclaimed, "The Osage brand! Now you believe good Indian?"

"Yes, thank God!" said Coleman, as he joyously shook the old warrior's hand.

Convinced that the Indian was his friend, yet recalling the many puzzling and mysterious tales about the place, he began to wonder if anyone had seen Chuckwood come to his apartment. He also remembered the tale Luke Berry had once told him, that in broad daylight a man was seen rushing out of the spooky place as though pursued by some ferocious beast, his clothing torn to shreds. "But I'll go," he resolved.

"All right, Chuckwood—I will go."

"You meet me across big ditch," suggested Chuckwood.

"What time?" Coleman asked.

"You come stay night—my place."

"Yes," Coleman assured him.

"All right. Dark night, me come, you cross big ditch. Heap Chuckwood show you way."

"Good, true Indian," remarked Coleman, as the old red man left.

While it might have seemed to the average man a daring thing to do, to Coleman it was only his duty. He was not afraid, and since Chuckwood had shown him the Osage brand, he was not only fearless, but had a premonition that he was going on a mission which would be of material aid.

When Coleman reached the bank of the gulch the next night, he was met by Chuckwood, who, after following big cracks in the ground and tramping around in various directions for an hour, conducted Coleman over winding steps, and with him ascended a steep bank near the In-

dian's tent. At first Coleman had planned to enter the place of ghosts that night, but Chuckwood said, "No—heap bad white man kill, shoot us from behind trees. Mebbe so Chuckwood no see him." And upon the Indian's advice Coleman spent the night in the hermit's tent.

At break of dawn Coleman got his first view of this dwelling which he had often seen from a distance. It revealed once more that the red men are not so primitive in their tastes as people are led to believe. For more than a hundred years grafters had said the Indians were useless and an impossible race; but it was ridiculous to think such things, Coleman told himself, as he gazed around the interior of the hermit's home.

Chuckwood's tent and its appurtenances were distinctively different from any he had ever seen before, and unlike any other Indian home in the state. Outwardly, the trench surrounding the base of his canvas home was the shape of the map of the Kozart Nation. Poles and forked posts supported the brown canvas walls and roof that had been patched and repatched in several places. The interior of the tent was a sight not easily forgotten. Bows and arrows, beads, moccasins, knives, hatchets, and other relics were not all that was to be seen. Despite the apparent primitiveness and eccentricities of the aged hermit, in his being was the desire for knowledge and a love of high ideals. His home was clean and well-kept. Bear, buffalo, and tiger skins lay upon the hard-packed red-clay floor. Three stools made from kokra-wood, a hickory rocker, a dogwood stool, and a crude table of blackjack constituted the furniture, while on a shelf at the side of the tent were books—Hugo's "Toilers of the Sea," Keats' Poems, and volumes of Kipling's verse. On the table in the rear were a kerosene lamp, a copy of Bunyan's "Pil-

grim's Progress," the Bible, and a pamphlet of the American Constitution.

Coleman looked about him, saw the books, the rugs, the furniture, to his senses a harmonious collection of color and outline. Among the choice things his quick eye lit upon were rare and artistically-made bowls and vases, Indian baskets, craftsman pottery; and he wondered at the infinite patience that had been exercised in the making of these works of art. "If only the red men had been given an equal chance," he sighed in sympathetic appreciation of the Indians' marked ability and native talents, "the world would be richer in art."

A broad grin came over the noble old man's face as he said, "Chuckwood friend of Bearskin."

"The Chief?"

"Yes. We go school all same time."

Coleman smiled his appreciation.

"We go college, too—long time go."

"Then that accounts for the books, the cleanliness and sanitation of your home."

"Yes. But when Hatfield kill my squaw and papooses, me come back, live here all time—make white man believe me no talk."

"Well, Chuckwood, my visit to your home has been one of the revelations of my life, and if you ever need a friend, count on me."

The hermit was standing like a statue, but his face brightened with appreciation. "Chuckwood know the day you come Kozart. Chuckwood know what you do all time. Chuckwood know girl white man love. Mebbe so. Heap big Chuckwood help white girl sometime, mebbe so."

"Thank you, my friend," Coleman returned.

Presently they went out and entered the most feared

spot in the Kozart country, Coleman taking his belt and two revolvers. The entrance to the ghost house was through cockle-burr patches, jimpson weeds, thorny bushes and tangled dead blackberry vines, entwined with tricky underbrush that was almost impassable.

Once in the open space where the weather-beaten two-story structure stood, Coleman paused a moment. The winter winds and the summer heat had wiped away the paint. Windowpanes were out, doors swung wide open, and dusty old cobwebs and numerous wasps' nests as large as a man's hat clung to the eaves. The roof was partly caved in, and scattered crude hand-made bricks and mud-mortar lay at the foot of a toppled chimney. A flock of pigeons cooed and made love to each other on the comb of the house.

"Dead man this way," said Chuckwood, pointing in the direction where he had seen the body.

"All right, Chuckwood; but we will enter the house first," replied Coleman. Then, with hand on revolver, his mind undisturbed by the much-talked-of figures and human bones which had been reported seen about the place, he started toward the house.

A shot rang out.

Coleman ducked behind a tree, his revolver in hand and ready for use. But before he could speak, Chuckwood had sprung, and from his smoking gun Coleman knew that it was Chuckwood who had fired. In another moment, with cat-like agility, the Indian was inside the house, as long-tailed rats raced out of their rendezvous and peaceful bats and darting whippoorwills took flight through the broken windowpanes and open doors.

Bang! Bang! Two more shots.

Coleman rushed to Chuckwood's aid. Beside the Indian on the floor lay a wounded man. Upon close scrutiny

his wound was not serious, though he was temporarily helpless. Chuckwood now stuck his gun back into its holster, and laughed as he said, "Mebbe so Pete think he can shoot—ugh!"

"Were you hit?" queried Coleman.

"No. Chuckwood no hurt—Pete peep out side door—Chuckwood see—Pete raise gun—Chuckwood shoot from hip. Chuckwood no want kill—Chuckwood shoot at white man's hand."

"But you hit both hands."

"Ugh—huh. Pete man heap bad, heap bold. When Chuckwood shoot, Pete man change gun other hand. He shoot—he miss—Chuckwood shoot other hand. Heap bad white man drop gun. Chuckwood like Buffalo Bill—never miss."

"So it's you, you dirty dog!" called the wounded man, sneering at Coleman.

"I don't know you, stranger; but you are not dealing with Hatfield now," said Coleman. "Have you anything to say?"

"Say hell! You think I'd squeal, eh? Hatfield will kill you for this, you Indian-lover, you!" the man snarled out.

Chuckwood grunted and grinned.

"Why are you here?" asked Coleman.

"None of your damn business!"

"Employed by Hatfield, I suppose?"

"Go to hell!"

The fellow was Pete Novak, a fugitive, one of Hatfield's henchmen.

"Tie him, Chuckwood," said Coleman sternly, "and we will take him to your tent and keep him there until we are ready to release him."

The Indian bandaged the bandit's hands and tied his

legs, while Coleman proceeded to search the interior of the place.

It might seem strange that a place so well known would not have been investigated by officers, but the environs were hard to penetrate; and, too, of those few who in years gone had ventured into it, none had ever returned. Besides, Hatfield being in power and those under him having no regard for law, no attention was paid to the terrible tales circulated about the weird sounds and gruesome scenes at night.

At a glance Roger saw crude wooden steps nailed to a side wall which led up to the second floor. Climbing them, with the aid of his flashlight he saw grotesque skulls and some electrical paraphernalia, which he readily perceived had been used to frighten and intimidate the Indians. On further investigation he found a concealed passageway which led to an underground tunnel in the direction of the Kozart county road and the home of Tom Blackburn. For years, perhaps, this had been a felonious meeting-place.

"The ghost? Only a myth!" said Coleman to himself.

Hatfield had made use of this place for no other purpose than to intimidate the Indians and half-breeds.

Descending from the second-story room, emerging from the house, Coleman followed Chuckwood about two hundred yards east of the desolate building. Suddenly the hermit stopped and said, "See man's head! Heap dead man!"

Coleman took but one glance, then stepped back aghast at the gruesome sight. He stepped nearer, cleared away the brush, untied the rope and unrolled the sack which covered the form. Bending over the body, he rolled it over. Between the shoulders were three indented holes

in the coat. The sack was stiff with blood. It was plain to be seen that the man had been shot down from the back by his assassin.

"Hickey! Doc Hickey!" gasped Coleman.

"Hickey! Hickey!" echoed Chuckwood. "Heap good man!"

"Did you know him?" asked Roger, his face grim.

"Yes—he come many times."

"Stay with you?"

"Yes. Heap good man stay all night long time go."

Recalling what Hickey had told him the night of the open debate about a secret Indian code and where to find it in the event anything happened to him, Coleman removed the shoe, tore off the heel, and extracted a piece of paper bearing the message.

"Hickey heap good Indian, and friend to white man," said Chuckwood.

"Oh God, give me wisdom and a way to stop this merciless injustice and slaughter of the red men!" and Coleman broke down, and wept.

"White man want money," Chuckwood said.

"Yes, some of them," Coleman replied softly.

"Hatfield love money better he love God," said Chuckwood.

"How true!" Coleman returned. "But the government is not to blame. It's because other affairs of the nation keep Congress in a state of turmoil, and many mad men in official positions deceive those in authority over them; and Congressmen don't know what is going on in the Kozart range."

"No excuse," said Chuckwood.

"Thank God all men are not like Hatfield!" Coleman added.

"Hatfield all time mebbe so make excuse. He big strong man."

"But the strong should aid the weak."

"Ugh!" Chuckwood grunted. "Heap Indian heap strong. Hatfield weak in body, heap selfish in head. What do white man want Chuckwood do?"

"You will do exactly as I tell you, won't you, Chuckwood?"

"Chuckwood say yes."

"Can you carry the body?"

"Ugh! Me carry horse," he grunted out.

"But you are getting old, Chuckwood."

The Indian grinned. "Heap Indian never get old."

"All right," said Coleman. "Bring the body to town tomorrow, take it to the City Drug Store, and when people gather around you, in signs tell them how you found Hickey. But do not involve me. Understand, Chuckwood?"

"No explain. Chuckwood all time know. Mebbe so white man need Chuckwood some day—mebbe so Chuckwood heap fight, heap help good man. Chuckwood all time good man friend," the Indian warrior replied, pleased at rendering Coleman aid.

Forcing Novak to walk ahead of them, Coleman and Chuckwood took him to the hermit's tent, then Coleman bade the old Indian goodbye and returned to Kozart with a daring resolution in his mind.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN the middle of the morning the following day, Chuckwood threw the human bundle across the back of his bony horse and rode through the streets of Kozart, stopping in front of the City Drug Store. Heretofore, save the week of Florence Berry's funeral, the Indian had been in town only on the days preceding the Fourth of July and Christmas, and he was, of course, the immediate cause of a curious crowd gathering as he dismounted and pulled the sack from the back of his steed. He merely nodded, batted his squint eyes, and stood as though he could neither hear nor speak, as various ones made signs to him in an effort to learn where he had found the body. Great excitement prevailed when the news was spread that it was Hickey's, and when it was learned that he was one of the Osage tribe, throngs of Indians gathered around, expressing sympathy in their way. They agreed to a modern burial the following day.

"How did you come to find him?" Doctor Justice asked. Chuckwood only shook his head.

Mart Massey, Al Dawson, Claud Hood and Tom Blackburn had now arrived at the scene, and Claud Hood, appearing surprised as he looked upon the body, asked if anyone knew where Chuckwood found him.

"No, the fool can't talk," Dawson bellowed.

"Sure, I know that, but let's get one of the Indians to make signs," suggested Massey.

"Come on, give us the story, or we'll accuse you of

the crime," said Tom Blackburn in Indian signs as he approached Chuckwood.

Tom was well versed in Indian signs and languages of the five civilized tribes, having lived in the Indian Nations since boyhood.

Chuckwood only stared at him with contempt.

"Come on—tell us," urged Blackburn in signs.

"Me horse leave—me hunt—me go big brush, heap woods, heap bad place. Chuckwood find dead man, find horse too," came the response in signs.

"Just like a damn Indian, looking for a horse!" growled Mart Massey.

"What did you kill him for?" questioned Blackburn.

"Me kill him?" was Chuckwood's reply.

"Yes, you fool! You know you killed him!"

The Indian's stoical expression did not change. He only shook his head, and in signs said, "Pe-sha, Pa-gal-la, Slo-baa," and started to mount his horse.

"That cowardly skunk killed that bird. We ought to slap him in jail," asserted Blackburn.

Chuckwood whirled, and with a staccato movement leaped at Blackburn's throat, kicked him in the stomach, and struck him on the chin, sprawling him flat upon the pavement.

Al Dawson drew his gun and pointed at the Indian's back, but Roger Coleman, until now seemingly unconcerned, knocked Dawson's arm upward as the gun went off, and said, "For God's sake, Al, give the poor old fellow a chance. He's deaf and dumb!"

Dawson replaced his gun in his holster, stared at Coleman and sarcastically remarked, "So you're an Indian-lover, are you?"

"You are excited, Al."

"That damn Indian's been playin' possum. He understood every word Tom said," Dawson declared.

Hiding his feelings, Coleman discreetly replied, "Well, surely, Al, you would not shoot a crazy man in the back. I thought you braver than that."

Dawson was of large and powerful physique, not only bold and fearless like the others of his type, and neither he nor Blackburn ever lost a combat where nerve and brawn played a part.

As the crowd stood dazed at the manner in which the Indian had sprawled Blackburn, Dawson's red hair bristled with anger, and he exclaimed, "Well, by God! I'll lick the fool with my fists!" Then he lunged toward Chuckwood with a vicious blow, which missed its mark. He received in return a terrific punch from the Indian's fist, which knocked him backward, and a second blow laid him flat on the sidewalk.

Cowboys whooped, newsboys yelled, for it was the first time either Blackburn or Dawson had ever been knocked down, and the age and appearance of the hermit added amusement and surprise to the joy of the crowd.

As both victims arose from the pavement with blood-smearred faces, they pulled their guns; but Coleman interceded and motioned to Chuckwood to mount his horse and depart.

Wathena Berry was watching the affray from the drug store window with intense interest. Jake Hatfield and Silas Hood, who drove up in an automobile, were more than amazed at Coleman's daring, for Tom Blackburn was a crack shot, and one of the most dangerous men in the state.

"You must be a government dog!" shouted Blackburn.

"Just a real American—that's all," Coleman replied.

"I'll kill the skunk," muttered Blackburn, as he watched the Indian mount his horse. But Chuckwood only nodded, blinked his eyes and galloped away, while the Indians carried off Hickey's body.

The disgruntled leaders immediately assembled in the private suite of the Hatfield Bank. "How did it happen?" asked Hatfield.

"Damned if I know!" returned Massey vigorously.

"But I paid Al and Tom to kidnap old Hickey and keep him under cover until after the election," averred Claud Hood.

"The skunk fought back, and it took four of us to handle him," interpolated Dawson.

"I'm going to tell you, boys, we can't pull the same kind of stuff on these birds we used to. It means war. We must win the confidence of the skunks and treat them like friends," said Silas Hood.

"Well, for a while at least," conceded Jake.

"Silas is getting old, and losing his pep," chimed in Massey.

"No, that's not it, boys," said Nick Patterson. "But the Indians are no longer troublesome. We got most of their land, and got away with it. Our agents are cleaning up around Toh, Ska, Hornba and Shuga, and our commissions are pretty fat. Furthermore, those birds are going to school, becoming educated, and are learning the ways of the white man. Indian agents are more active, and we must exercise caution."

"Agents hell!" snapped Claud Hood. "They have broken every Indian treaty ever made, and we might as well get our share. That Hickey was a smooth duck, and we ought to be proud that Al and Tom bumped him off."

"But why in hell didn't you boys throw his body into the old house, set fire to it, and burn the skunk up?" growled Hatfield.

"We had it fixed all right," Dawson proceeded to explain.

"Why didn't it work?" Hatfield demanded.

"Say, Jake, we piled enough brush on that yap, and planted enough powder in the old house to shake goose eggs out of a red bird."

"Was the dynamite dry?" Hatfield asked.

"Yes, dry as a bone."

"And you say you had plenty of it?" quizzed Massey.

"Plenty! Say man, if the damned stuff had gone off, all the yaps in China would be running around yet, huntin' for the loose hair we shook out of their heads."

"Why didn't you set fire to it?" Hatfield asked.

"We did!" Blackburn retorted. "I set the brush on fire so it would burn up to the fuse and the powder explode and wreck the dump, and we rushed down the tunnel to get out of the way."

"All I can say is, you fellows made a hell of a mess of it," Hatfield stated, with an expression of contempt.

"But you see, Jake, we only took the body out there day before yesterday. A rain came up after we got out of the hole, and we didn't take any chances going back near that powder for a day or two. We intended going back tonight," Dawson explained.

"Why not accuse Chuckwood of the murder?" Blackburn suggested.

"No, that wouldn't work," Dawson returned.

"Why?"

"Hickey made friends with the Indians, and everybody knows an Indian will suffer his own death rather than murder a friend," Dawson declared.

"Better keep our eyes on Coleman!" exclaimed Blackburn. "He's a skunk, too, and he ain't got me fooled any."

"No, Tom. No investigator would have done what he did today. He's a sentimental fool—chicken-hearted, that's all."

"That's what I tried to tell Tom," Bob Blackburn added. "Don't you remember he leaped out of the car at the Indian school the day of your accident, Jake, and made a fuss over the crippled kids?"

"Did you say accident?" asked Massey, laughing.

"Hell! Sure! What else could it have been?" returned Hatfield, as he winked at Hood.

The group disbanded and went to their respective homes, while at the Mead Mortuary the Indians paid the cost to prepare Hickey's body for burial.

Long before the noon hour of the following day, Indians from the Kozart range poured into the town to pay tribute to the man they had learned was their loyal friend.

Old Glory was waving from a tall flagpole which had been set up as soon as the news of Hickey's death reached the Indians. The six men who were pall-bearers had qualified for military service, and fought overseas for America. Each one had pinned to the lapel of his coat a little badge of red, white and blue. Behind the auto-hearse which carried Hickey's body to the grave were a hundred Indians on swift-running ponies. Over the corpse floated an Indian banner, and in front of the procession rode a young Indian brave, carrying the American emblem.

The scene was so impressive in its complete demonstration of loyalty to the man who had given his life to the Indian cause, that scarcely a person who stood on the sidewalk and watched the procession as it passed could keep back the tears.

Wathena Berry had been one of the first to send flowers to the chapel where Hickey's body had lain. Not only did the foul way in which he had been murdered affect her, but tender were her childhood memories of the good, kind man who had named her, and had befriended the whole family. She reflected, shuddered, and became

more bitter than ever toward Hatfield and his followers. And deep in her heart hovered an uncanny feeling that Roger Coleman was the next man Hatfield would order killed.

Roger felt keenly the tragedy of Hickey's death, and for several days a deep shadow of sadness darkened his countenance. He not only respected the man because of his nobility of character, but highly esteemed him as an aid in his great mission to Kozart. He had yearned to attend the funeral service, but had remained away, knowing the importance of not revealing his true sentiments and feelings to the Hatfield group.

He could forgive the ignorant country bootlegger, accept the apologies of a thief who admitted his wrong and started life anew, and the hi-jacker who took a chance with death when he held a man up; but he could not forgive anyone who could deliberately kill one of his own cohorts—as Luke Berry had been killed, and murder a man like Hickey. He was so moved and determined to wrest from Jake Hatfield his villainous power that he resolved to take Hickey's place and carry on his work.

Immediately following Hickey's burial, Indians throughout the Kozart country gathered, held councils, and decided upon war against the Hatfield faction. As once before, Coleman got out of bed one morning and picked up a note that had been slipped beneath his door during the night. To insure attention, on the envelope was written:

“Ne-ka Sho-ga-hugh, Has-ku-ke-da, Ku-e-lo.

He-ne, Es-sa-ra, Es-sa-ra, Hu-she-ha, Hu-sa, He-ka.”

Only a glance was needed, and the meaning of the Osage language was clear. “Large body of soldiers come

at night—kill, kill, scalp men,” the message read. Then he opened the envelope, and in English read:

“We have obeyed the laws, we have lived as the white people have asked us to live. But Hatfield is killing our noble leaders, and he is going free. We shall go to Kozart, burn down the town, and hang bodies to trees and poles. We are on the warpath now, and white men can’t stop us. Goodbye to the good white man. (THE CAPTAIN).”

Coleman’s hands trembled as he scanned the words. “God!” he said, “the old-time Indian warfare would be the upsetting of all my work and plans. Chuckwood! Chuckwood! He’s the man to stop it. I’ll see him to-night.”

Early that night Roger Coleman secretly paid a second visit to Chuckwood’s tent, and after a brief discussion they proceeded together to the grounds where warfare maneuvers were in full sway among the five civilized tribes. After a dramatic appeal by the old Indian in the glaring light of the bonfire, with the aid of a stirring speech from Coleman, success crowned their efforts to prevent the angry red men from going on the warpath. Chuckwood explained to the red men that the end of injustice to the Kozarts was rapidly approaching, and that Coleman would soon have news for them that would mean freedom from the ever-clutching hand of Hatfield and his followers.

CHAPTER XXVII

NOW that Coleman had directly subdued the anger of the Kozart range Indians and prevented their going on a barbarous warpath, he turned his attention to the plan of defeating Bob Blackburn's election as county attorney. As part of his work he thought it best to continue calling on Edna, who had just returned home. And more diplomacy was now necessary as concerned his being overly courteous to Wathena. But as one sad incident following another had left her in a state of discouragement, he called one night to reassure her of his devotion. He had thought himself entirely unsuspected, but while they were seated behind closed doors and drawn shades, a man who had seen him enter the Berry home telephoned Edna Hatfield. She was seated at the piano when the telephone bell rang, and the maid Cinders announced the call.

"Hello! How's the girlyie tonight?" came a strange voice. "Guess you'd be glad to see me if you knew me."

"And who are you?" Edna inquired.

"You may never know," said the voice. "I've called to tell you a secret."

"What is it?"

"I understand you know Roger Coleman?"

"I've met him. Why do you ask me that?"

"I suppose you know he calls on Wathena Berry?"

Annoyed by his impertinence, she replied, "He's nothing to me. Who are you? Is this a joke?"

"Bet yer life it's no joke!"

"Then what do you want?"

"I want to tell you about Wathena."

"I am not interested in Wathena Berry or Roger Coleman, either. And unless you tell me your name I shall hang up."

"Oh yes you are, and you might be willing to pay for the information I could give you on them both," he said abruptly.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you might be interested to know that Wathena is not Luke's daughter, and Coleman doesn't know it, and he's dead in love with her."

"But why do you telephone me? He's nothing to me, and I wouldn't wipe my feet on her. Dad knows the whole family."

"So do I."

Unyielding to his strategy, though eager for information, she hesitated a moment, then said, "Are you still on the wire?"

"Yes," came the reply.

"All women love gossip, you know," she agreeably volunteered.

"Oh, I thought you'd admit it. The secret I have regarding the Berry girl and Coleman is worth a pile of dough."

"How much do you want?"

"What does the amount matter to you?"

"Well, what is your price?" Edna persisted.

"One thousand dollars," he said stiffly. "All cash, and no dickerin' around,—you get me?"

"Just what do you mean?"

"Cut out the four-flushing, lady. I'm taking no chances of joining the Indians underground, but I could tell you a lot of things."

Edna's mind was filled with intense curiosity. "I must see him at any cost," she murmured. "Will you come to see me?" she asked, disguising her eagerness.

"What's in it?" he asked abruptly.

"I will pay your price," she said, as she heard him burst into a loud laugh. "You make me laugh," he said. "You could pay a million and never miss it. But if you won't tell Coleman or your dad that I called you, I might ring up at eight tomorrow night. I wear a checked suit with belted back, brown hat, tie and shoes, carry a cane. I'm downtown. Find me, and I'll tell you more."

Then he hung up. Edna's curiosity increased. She quickly called Central and tried to learn from where the message came. Failing, she slipped into her roadster and drove rapidly downtown. For an hour she drove through the business district, in the hope that she would see the strange man and learn his identity. But she returned home without having succeeded.

The following night, when Coleman called, she greeted him coldly, saying, "Roger Coleman, are you going with that little Berry cat?"

"Why, Edna?"

"Well, someone called me on the telephone last night, a strange voice, and said he could give me a lot of information about you and her, and after talking a little while hung up."

"That's queer," said Roger calmly. "Probably just someone trying to kid you."

Just then the telephone bell rang. Edna jumped up quickly, ran over, took the receiver off the hook, and motioned to Roger to come and listen in. "Hello," she called.

"Well, you didn't find me last night," said the voice.

"Really, I thought it all a joke," Edna replied.

"It's no joke, girly, and I might come to see you this evening and tell you the story if you'll see me alone, and you can part with a thousand bones," said the stranger.

Coleman signalled Edna to say yes.

"All right. Do you know the way?"

"Oh, don't worry about me getting lost in this one-horse burg. I can tell you what hangs in the east-end closet, what corner the Steinway is in, where you meet Coleman on Saturday nights, and where your dad keeps his Kentucky revolver."

"Then you've been here?"

"I'll say I have! Is there anyone around?"

"No—only the servants."

"All right—have a thousand bones ready. I'll tell you the story. Don't worry about me, but play cards face up, or my gang'll bump you an' your dad off. I'll be there in ten minutes."

"Blackmailer!" exclaimed Roger as the receiver went up.

"Oh well, what do I care for a thousand dollars? It comes easy," Edna said, laughing and seemingly thrilled. "Hide and listen to his story."

"You really want me to stay?"

"Surely," Edna replied, and Coleman concealed himself behind a large music cabinet in the room.

Within ten minutes the door bell rang. Edna opened the door and a flashily dressed man—perhaps in the early forties—entered. He glanced dubiously about the room, all the while keeping both hands buried in his coat pockets as though gripping guns. His auburn hair was tinged with gray, and the deeply grooved lines in his sunken cheeks told something of the life he had led.

"I want the dough first, and make it snappy!" he demanded.

Edna handed him ten one hundred dollar bills.

With his right hand still in his bulging coat pocket, the stranger said: "Well, you see, I'm from Kentucky. I used to be Florence Bradley's sweetie. One day she got excited and married Luke Berry, and seven months later her kid was born. I am the kid's father, but Luke was so ignorant he never woke up until several years later."

"And why are you in Kozart?"

"I really came to steal the girl, but when I learned her mother was dying, I didn't have the nerve to take the kid."

"And what is your name?" Edna questioned.

"Frank Peterson, ex-traveling salesman de luxe from Eastern Kentucky."

"And do you know my father?"

"Do I!" he ejaculated. "Can a rooster crow?"

"Where did you know him?"

"Say girly, I knew your old dad when he wore one shirt three years without taking it off, never took a bath, and combed his hair with a curry-comb."

"Do you know Mr. Coleman?"

"Yes, and he's a shrewd duck. Bob Blackburn paid me a thousand dollars to follow that skunk, and it's the hardest money I ever earned."

"Why?"

"Cause he's like an eel, an' sharp as a needle."

"Are you sure you mean Coleman, the oil broker?"

"Forget it! If he's an oil broker, I'm a bullfrog."

"Then what is he?" Edna asked.

"If you want the truth, he's a crooked investigator. He's here to get evidence against your father, an' he don't give a dang about you. There's no difference between Coleman and me, except I'm a crook an' admit it, an' he's a high-toned slicker."

"Why did you think I'd be interested?"

"I didn't think it—I knew it."

"How?"

"Say kid, he's pretendin' to be sweet on you, an' he's made a fool out of a dozen others."

"Can you prove this?"

"I don't have to," he said gruffly.

"Do you live in Kozart?"

Without answering her, the man arose as if to depart, but he glimpsed three diamond rings on a table near the piano. "Well, some shiners!" he said, with a satisfied gaze. "I'll take them as a Christmas present."

"No, no! Those are mine!" Edna cried.

"Well, I'll take them for a week-end vacation to the pawn-shop."

"Please don't take them!"

"Say! Cut the comedy, girlie. Make a move, an' I'll blow you open," Peterson said brazenly, as he pointed his gun at her, picked up the rings, then added, "Always keep some real dough around, lady, 'cause I may look you up again. And if you'd rather dance than carry crutches, don't mention this friendly visit, for if you do my gang'll bump you off. But I gotta bank in Kansas to blow, so so-long." He left the room, entered a waiting car outside, and drove away.

It may seem preposterous that a man of Coleman's type would stand hearing direct insults flung at the woman he dearly loved. Of course the blood in his arteries thumped and the veins in his head swelled in indignation. But he was on a serious mission, and other things must be considered. For instance, up to now Hatfield had not appeared suspicious. The validity of Peterson's statement about Blackburn employing him, Roger could not believe. Aside from all this, Edna was pursuing him. She

was such easy prey, Peterson no doubt would concoct some other story, return and demand another sum. Hence Coleman's mind was bent upon a way out of the situation, instead of resenting insulting remarks.

All the while Peterson was relating the story Coleman's mind was definitely settled on another thing. He loved Wathena, and, no matter how unfortunate her mother had been, nor what Peterson had to say, to him Wathena was pure, innocent, and the girl he loved. And he murmured to himself, "She shall never know."

Edna's eyes glared with anger as Coleman emerged from behind the cabinet.

"Well," said Coleman, "from my position I could see the man. It's the same old gag. But he got away with it, and you handed him the money and got nothing whatever for it. He'll be back for more another time."

But Edna turned, livid with anger. "I'll have dad run that huzzy Wathena out of town—she's as common as mud!"

"If Edna tells her father, it might mean the blasting of my future plans," Roger said to himself. "Up to now I've kept everything a secret. But I must have her confidence now, if it takes a promise of marriage—or any contact she may desire."

He gave no credence to Peterson's tale about Wathena's birth, nor did he think it could be true. But what the man had said about Blackburn having him followed served to complicate the situation in which he now found himself. However, self-possessed, with an electrically-moving brain, Coleman merely smiled, and said, "It's the same old blackmail scheme, Edna."

"You don't believe in him?"

"Certainly not."

"But he said Blackburn has had you followed."

"That may be true," Roger said with humor. "You know, I've been accused of everything from doing hem-stitching to shaving fuzz off the moon with a butcher-knife."

"But you seem to take it as a joke!"

"It's nothing else."

"Do you really think so, Roger?"

"Why Edna, this beats the movie stories a million ways. Think of it! A one-shot five-minute talk, and the mysterious man nonchalantly walks away with a thousand dollars in cash. I'll say that fellow's a star!"

Coleman appeared so calm and unconcerned that Edna's anger subsided, and she said, "I'd hate to believe it all, but what he said about Wathena must be true."

Still suspicious, she ran her hand down the inside of Roger's vest, thinking she might find a government badge; and as her fingers touched a piece of steel, she cried, "Damn you! It's true! And you are here to ruin father!"

Coleman smiled, unbuttoned his vest, threw it back, and Edna saw only a buckle on his wide suspenders. She breathed a sigh of relief, then raised her head and said, "Kiss me, darling—kiss me." And Coleman responded to her wish.

"You must not take the word of a dope addict, Edna. They make trouble," Coleman said, winking at an interesting picture on the wall.

"But what about Wathena?" Edna asked. "She has never been respected, even by her closest neighbors. Surely you would not fall in love with that type of a girl!"

Coleman's heart ached and his blood boiled again as he listened to Edna's uncivil talk. But he could not afford, at this stage of the game at least, to show resentment. To further his object and to console her, he kissed and embraced Edna, suggesting that they not mention the Peterson incident either to her father or Blackburn, that

he would learn who Peterson was and his whereabouts, and that if she remained silent he would not only make Peterson confess, but return her money and jewels. Having restored Edna's confidence in him, he left for his apartment.

Once away, Coleman's brain moved with lighting-like rapidity. On first impulse he decided to tell Wathena and trust her. Yet the badge he wore and the secrets he knew were more important even than love; and if Wathena could stand the strain, if she could pull through, forgive and forget and still remain loyal to him, happiness would come in the end for them both. And, despite slurring remarks and Edna's attempts to use him as a screen or to insult him concern Wathena, he resolved to go through with the plan he had formed.

"I must put Wathena on her guard. I'll kidnap Peterson and take him to Chuckwood's tent, instruct Chuckwood to tie him and keep him there until after election, and thus prevent any attempt on his part to harm Wathena or to interfere with my affairs. Yes, that's certainly what I'll do," was his decision.

Then he telephoned to Wathena.

"Some strange man may come to see you or try to telephone you," he said. "Keep your windows and doors locked tonight. Don't answer the telephone. Turn your lights out, and go to bed."

"What do you mean?" Wathena asked excitedly.

"Don't ask me, sweetheart—I can't tell you now. Don't call me—don't try to see me."

"But Roger, you frighten me!" she persisted.

"I cannot explain now, Wathena. If you are loyal and true, trust me—regardless of everything. Just put your whole faith in God—and me, and everything will come out all right."

"Oh, of course I will, Roger."

If Wathena had known the impending danger, the plots brewing to kill Coleman, Edna's shrewd plans, and the thrilling days that were soon to follow, she would have clung to the telephone. But instead, she locked the doors and closed the windows with the props used to raise them during the day, turned out the lights, then fell upon the bed shivering, thinking and wondering what he meant.

After putting Wathena on her guard, Coleman hastened from his apartment, intent upon apprehending Peterson. He stopped at a gasoline station, and presently Peterson sauntered by, carrying a suitcase, evidently on his way to catch the ten o'clock train. Waiting until he passed a vacant lot, Coleman drove down the street, turned, whirled his car up to the curb, and as Peterson neared him he leaped out and, like a flash, thrust his gun into Peterson's face. "Not a move!" Coleman warned.

Peterson dropped his suitcase and grimaced.

Pressing his gun tightly into the man's side, Coleman pointed to his car. "Get in!" he commanded.

As Peterson got into the machine, Roger made him take the wheel. "Drive as I say," he ordered.

"What does this mean?" Peterson asked.

"Don't ask any questions. Drive with care. Don't make a false move. I don't like to do such things as this, old man, but you have forced me to it," Coleman said emphatically.

"But you can explain what it means."

"Yes, at the proper time," Coleman returned. "Now, don't ask any more questions, and don't look back."

An hour later found them walking through the winding narrow trail of cracked ground down the embankment, up over the gulch, and to Chuckwood's tent.

"Slo-baa, Slo-baa, Pa-gala," Coleman hoarsely said, in answer to the howl of the long-haired dog, as he neared

Chuckwood's home, and the Indian came forth to greet him.

"Chuckwood heap glad see you."

"Glad to see you, Chuckwood."

"Mebbe so—heap more bad man?"

"Yes. Tie this man to Novak. Tie their arms and legs so they can neither walk nor get their hands loose. Keep them, feed them, and I'll tell you when I want them," Coleman requested, as he entered the tent.

"Mebbe so Chuckwood have heap fun," said the Indian, hurriedly bringing Indian ropes, with which he quickly and securely tied the hands and legs of Peterson. Unlike Novak, he was violent with oaths and threats as Chuckwood grinned and grunted with pleasure at his task.

"I will kill you for this," Peterson declared, as his wicked eyes met the determined expression on Coleman's face.

"If you have a chance."

"You are a coward!"

"Perhaps." Coleman replied, and smiled.

"All good—heap tied—no get loose," said the Indian as he finished Indian knots in the rope that Houdini would have found impossible to get out of.

"Damn you! I'll get you some day!"

"The less you talk, Peterson, the easier the charge will be."

"The hell you say!"

Chuckwood grinned and grunted happily.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE following week Coleman made it a point to see Edna daily, but she seldom mentioned Peterson, nor did she seem particularly concerned about the man. Instead, she piled one illusion upon another, much preferring to fondle and caress him, forcing him to say affectionate little things and reiterating how she could no longer live without him.

Saturday night when he called her father was away. The lights were soft and low, the shades drawn. Roger was shown to the music room by Cinders. Very shortly after Edna came in, appearing somewhat dispirited. Coleman had to confess honestly to himself that her greetings were always a genuine treat, if never a surprise. But on this night she flung both warm arms about his neck, clung to him and whispered, "Darling, I'm in trouble. Something dreadful has happened," her angelically affected voice dwindling entirely away.

"Just what do you mean?" Coleman asked.

"Oh, you know, dear—I'm terribly worried."

"I don't understand you, Edna," said Coleman, remaining cool and undisturbed.

"It has never happened in my life before. Naturally I'm worried. I didn't want to tell you, but I had to—it concerns us both, sweetheart."

"What is it, dear?" drawing her near him and kissing her against his will.

"Oh, you know. Don't you realize what it means?"

Everybody would know, and I can't bear it! You still love me, don't you, dear?"

"And it has come to this!" Coleman told himself. "Election so near, and she springs this on me! God! What's coming next?" he was busy thinking, not overlooking, however, that he must keep up his end of the game. "Yes, darling, of course I love you. Why?"

"Then what shall we do?" she asked, apparently quite perturbed.

Even if she spoke the truth (which he doubted), knowing—so far as he was concerned—that there was no reason, he realized that he was about to be framed. He recalled the night she wore the low-cut seal-black dress, how she had decoyed, tormented and teased him almost beyond any man's endurance. But he knew full well that he had been conscious of all that transpired that night, that he had not yielded to her charm and lure, and that if she really was in the condition she insinuated it was somebody's else responsibility—not his. After a brief pause, he murmured: "Impossible, Edna—how could it be?"

Edna leaped to her feet. "What is this invisible barrier between us!" she cried. "You made me learn to love you, to desire you, to be unhappy when you are away. And now you insult me!"

"But I do care for you, Edna—a great deal," he meekly replied.

"Then why do you doubt me, and act the way you do?"

"I did not say I doubted you."

"But you do."

Coleman sat wondering.

"Why do you sit there like an idiot?" she abruptly asked. "Are you in love with that huzzy Wathena?"

"I was just thinking, Edna."

"Of her?"

"Perhaps."

Seized with resentment, trembling with anger, she shrieked, "You will marry me, or I'll kill you!"

Coleman's teeth clipped the edge of his tongue. He realized the situation was serious, that this new trumped-up charge was one that could easily upset his plans.

"I thought you loved me," he said, shaking his head sorrowfully.

"But you deceived me," she retorted.

Love was the artifice she employed when accusing him of leading her astray, and that delusion she hugged to her wicked heart. "You are like all men—ruin a woman, then just make excuses and laugh!"

"It is not a laughing matter, Edna."

"You're dead right! And you're going to marry me." Clenching her hands and staring at him with revenge in her eyes, she demanded, "Why don't you answer me?"

Despite her hostile stare, Coleman said calmly, "Won't you compose yourself, dear, and use the clever brain you claim to have?"

"But I'm not as excited as you think."

"I am quite sure of that, too," he smilingly replied.

"No man will ruin me and laugh more than once!" she cried, with a bitter expression.

"After all, I have jollied her, kept her in suspense and made her think I loved her," Coleman told himself. "What if she really loves me, and insists upon a ceremony? Love! She hasn't the slightest conception of its meaning. After all, though, she's a woman, and who knows what's in her heart?" At that moment Coleman resolved to keep Wathena in suspense no longer, but to confide in her and seek her aid.

To the government and Wathena he owed everything. To Edna Hatfield he owed nothing.

"Now, let us understand each other, Edna. You know I have repeatedly told you that we live different lives, live in different worlds. I could not make you happy, and you know it."

"That's a lie!—and merely an excuse," she almost screamed.

"But it is true, really, Edna."

"I know your kind now. It's that huzzy in the drug store—a pretty face. She can never boast of a father, and I wouldn't wipe my foot on her. She's been on intimate terms with every man in town. She's so low that I can't understand how a man like you would fall for her."

Never before had Coleman had such difficulty in keeping his temper in check. Yet such insults as she now heaped upon an innocent girl—and the one he loved—incensed him to the point where he would, at least indirectly, retaliate. "All you seem to think about, Edna, is the sexual phase of life, and you are totally oblivious to innocence and purity."

"You are positively insulting!" she screamed furiously.

"Your clothes, your money, your delicate, beautiful skin, perfect body and charm may delight and lure some men, but to me you have become little more than a degenerate, and I could never become attuned to your ideas of morality."

"Is that so!"

"Yes—and the price of frivolity is high."

"Dad would give me a million if I asked him."

"Perhaps he would," returned Coleman. Realizing that to annoy or to tantalize her would only make mat-

ters worse, and wishing to be alone to think, he said quietly, "Edna, we should not quarrel. I'll see what can be done." Unnoticed, he arose and walked out of the house, without bidding her goodnight, as she buried her head in a bank of fluffy pillows.

"But she shall not get me," he avowed, as he strolled along the crowded sidewalks downtown, and went to his apartment. Had his ardent, chivalrous tenderness left her in that pathetic and emotional mood, or was it just a scheme to protect her father? Remembering what Blackburn said the day he knocked the gun from his hand and prevented the killing of Chuckwood, Coleman began to wonder if Hatfield had not talked with Peterson and been convinced that Roger was a government man, but preferred his daughter to marry him rather than take the responsibility of having him killed. "Then, too, it may be that Edna really is in trouble," he reflected. "She knows many men."

A knock sounded at his door, and he turned quickly. At first he was prompted to call "Come in," then remembered that the door was locked. Stepping toward the door, he called, "Who is it?"

There was no response.

"Who is it?" Still there was no response.

The knocking increased, and was louder. One, two, three knocks. Realizing that it would arouse other occupants in the apartments, he again demanded, "Who is it?"

The response was an imperative knock.

"Speak, or I'll call the police," Coleman said.

"Call the police, if you dare! What chance have you with our police?" asserted the voice of a woman.

"What do you want?" Coleman asked.

"Open the door—I must see you! Father has returned. He knows everything—he's wild," came the voice from outside.

Throwing on a robe, Coleman quickly turned the key and opened the door. Edna Hatfield stepped in. A thousand things shot through his brain, though he calmly said, "Won't you be seated?" But his apparent aloofness infuriated her. She no longer wanted to reason or talk it over, nor even listen to any suggestion as to what might be done to relieve the situation.

"Father has found out, and says he will kill you. We must go away!" she cried dramatically.

"Is it you, Edna, or your father you want protected?" he flatly asked.

She did not reply, but his sang-froid was such that she became enraged, venomously denouncing him as a breaker of women's hearts.

She now realized that her father had been right. Only recently he had told her that Coleman was the smoothest and cleverest man in Kozart, and mentioned that she would do well to marry him. Yet everything she had tried had failed to win him, mentally or physically; even the consuming, vain pride with which she had been obsessed had been put aside in her effort to conquer.

Glaring at him fiercely, she cried, "Dad will kill you if I tell him everything!"

"There are worse things than death, Edna."

"But you got me this way?"

"What way?"

"You know very well what I mean," she said, and she recalled with keen regret the silly things she had done without avail—the flimsy, ultra-short Parisian gowns she had worn to attract him, revealing every line of her body, the low neckline, exposing her breast, the filmy black dress which clung so tightly to her hips, even the stimulating drug she had slipped into a glass of wine which he drank. Yet nothing had broken down his guard. Now she saw it all as foolish, nauseating.

"Well, if you don't love me and can't care for me, Roger, at least get me out of this. I'm wild!"

"But suppose you are mistaken about it all, Edna?"

"Do you think I'm a fool! Any woman knows. What are you going to do about it? Say something—do something, or I swear I'll tell dad everything!"

"I thought you said he knew."

"He suspects—that's all."

"How do you know he suspects?"

"Because he asked me."

Instantly an idea flashed through Roger's mind—a way out of this predicament. But he must act quickly. He had come to Kozart with no intention of gaining political power, with no such ambition or desire. But he had resolved to carry on the fight for the cause when Hickey was killed, since with Hickey out of the race Bob Blackburn would be re-elected, Hatfield the next governor, and a colossal state-wide swindling of the Indians would soon leave them without food or shelter.

"I'll appear remorseful," he told himself, "promise relief, then kidnap her. I'll take her to a secluded spot, have her guarded closely, then return and announce my candidacy."

He remembered what Chief Bearskin had told him—that if the time should ever come to prove his bravery, he should take the test necessary to become an Indian Chief, and, thinking of the voting Indians, he decided that was what he would do.

Also, he remembered Hickey had once told him that Chief Bearskin had the original message he was going to read to the public on election day. "He'll let me have it. I'm not afraid to read it, nor am I afraid to die if my death will bring justice and happiness to the Kozarts,"

he was saying to himself, "and if I can just get Edna out of the way and keep her quiet until after election, the sun will peep through the storm-clouds of Indian injustice."

Turning directly to Edna, sitting near the window in his room, he asked: "Do you really love me, Edna?"

Her eyes sparkled with anger and resentment, as she replied, "Love you! Who could love you! You are a coward, and your sole ambition is to wreck some innocent girl! You attacked me when you were drunk. I resisted until I became so exhausted I couldn't protect myself."

"Well, I'm sorry, Edna. I didn't realize what I was doing that night. It was the first time I had ever taken a drink," he replied with an easy conscience, knowing her story to be entirely untrue.

"Then take me to Chicago, Kansas City—anywhere; but get me out of this trouble is all I ask," she implored.

His head lowered in seeming remorse. "I guess you're right."

"You must realize what it means to me, and whatever is done must be done at once," she declared, regaining her self-assurance.

"Well, suppose we go to Kansas City?"

"Really, dear, do you mean it?"

"Yes," Coleman replied.

"When?"

"If you can be ready, we'll go tomorrow night."

"Oh, I thought you would do the right thing, Roger dear. I knew you were a gentleman," she rejoiced as she kissed him fervently.

Coleman promised to meet her in Opatonga the following night, and take the midnight Pecan train to Kansas City. She bade him goodnight and went downstairs, joyously leaped into her roadster, and rapidly drove home.

Retiring to her bedroom, looking into the mirror and laughing triumphantly, she said, "Conquest, after all!"

In her luxurious bed, gloating over the escapades from which she had always emerged victorious, snuggling her delicate skin in Oriental pajamas, and turning over in the soft consoling warmth of silky blankets, she smiled and went happily to sleep.

But as she slept and dreamed, Roger was spending a busy night racing to Opatonga City, interviewing government men, seeing railroad officials to obtain a chartered car, and arranging a plan that would further his kidnapping scheme.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE following day, after explaining to friends and to her father that she was going to visit a relative in Texas and would be away for several days, Edna drove to Opatonga City and met Coleman, as promised, in the lobby of the Wanumbra Hotel.

"It's all fixed," announced Coleman. "Drawing-room C, car four-thirty. The adjoining compartment is open."

"I'm too well known," she objected.

"Your name is Graves. We leave at twelve."

"All right, dear."

"No one will see you. We'll be alone."

"How about our meals?"

"Oh, I've fixed that all right. We will have plenty of fruit and sandwiches, magazines, papers, cards, anything we need, nothing to worry about. We'll reach Kansas City before tomorrow night and have dinner at the Muelbach. I'll go ahead and get on."

Coleman took a taxicab to the station and boarded the train, smiling at the already subsidized porter, who had made the berths down and left shoes protruding beneath them, a compartment door open with a coat and a cane on the made-up bed, and a suitcase parked in the aisle, to give the impression of other passengers on the train, though in reality there were none.

Later Edna arrived and tripped lightly into the Pullman. She glimpsed the suitcase in the aisle, the shoes strewn beneath the berths, and filmy garments hanging

over the edge of an upper, which gave every semblance of an occupied car. There was nothing to create suspicion. There was even a drowsy-looking trainman standing at the end of the car. He wore dark trousers, a white duck coat, and had his cap pulled sideways on his head. The scene was no different from that on other nights when she had taken the train, and she entered the drawing-room complacently. Her cruel black eyes had a touch of warmth as she looked soberly into Coleman's face, drew a deep breath and said, "Now we're alone, and can talk."

Presently the northbound midnight flyer rolled up to the Pecan station. There was the clang of the switch-engine bell—a slight jar, and the Kansas City Pullman had been attached, and the ten-car train rolled away, with Edna Hatfield in a state of contentment as she relaxed in Coleman's arms.

For two hours the train sped on in the blackness of a rainy night, with a wicked woman's mind at ease, but her supposed paramour's heart filled with contempt. Shortly after the train entered the remote post oak and dogwood forest near Spade Siding, the rumbling noise ceased, the cars stopped, and Coleman made a casual remark about a water tank.

"Gee! I wish I had one of your cocktails," he said.

"Really?" Edna quickly awakened from her apparent drowse, and said, "I have some gin in my bag. I could make one for you, dear, if we had a shaker. Ring for the porter."

"It would take dynamite to wake a porter at this hour," he declared.

"Try," she persisted.

Coleman pushed the buzzer, but there was no response.

"Go wake him, Roger. It's so cold and rainy a little drink would do us both good."

"All right, dear," he softly replied. He arose and left the compartment, turned the key in the door, and murmured to himself, "Could anything be more perfect? I set the trap, she enters and pulls the trigger." Presently the train was again in motion. Ten minutes passed, but Coleman did not return. Half an hour elapsed. "How queer!" Edna thought. Pushing the bell brought no response. She tried to read, but could only think and worry. "Perhaps he went out to the steps to get some fresh air, and fell off as the train jerked and pulled away," she thought. But when she tried to open the door, she was amazed to find it locked.

Her eyes grew wild. "What does this mean?" she exclaimed, pounding on the door. But no one came to her assistance. Beating against the walls of the adjoining compartment brought no response, and the train sped on.

As it slowed down in a curve of the road, through the window she saw flickering street lights of a village, but her hopes of escape faded as the train soon increased its speed and went thundering through the town. She tried to raise the window, but the rain and gusts of wind forced it down.

Presently the train slowed down, backed up, jerked forward. There was a rumbling noise, and the engine and regular train rolled away, leaving the Pullman in which Edna was imprisoned on an abandoned siding in a dark, dismal swamp, where singing crickets and croaking bullfrogs added to the weirdness of the night. Mingled with the howling wind was the cry of screech-owls. The rain fell in torrents for a time, and then died down to a cold, slow drizzle.

The petted daughter of Jake Hatfield had never before found herself in such a disagreeable situation. Her first fears that Coleman had fallen from the train were

soon dismissed, and a black rage of hate and desire for revenge took their place. Later the rain stopped, and the darkness of the gruesome night silently gave way to the break of dawn. From the car window strange shadows loomed up in the distance. An aura of green, turquoise and yellow brightened slowly as the early morning sun tried to make its appearance, then seemed to fade into the screen of light and delicate sulphur fumes. In the distance Edna could see a white house with a red roof nestling in a grove of green chinaberry trees, the only mark of habitation.

To add to her discomfort, a white-winged bat, in an effort to escape a hungry hawk, flung its wings against the window, crushing its body, and three monocules with scissor-like tails, green eyes and fuzzy heads, flew to the glass and sucked the fluid of the crippled creature from the cold window-pane.

"Kidnapped!" she thought. "Roger Coleman will pay with his life for this!" But, despite her desire for revenge, she had to admit to herself that for once in her pampered life she found herself alone, helpless, filled with gloom, and knew not her destiny.

There was no sound in the car. She now saw clearly that it was a perfectly laid plot, a trick, and that she was the victim of her own scheming and lust for conquest. She realized, too, that after all her many boastful remarks, her beauty, money, and her father's power were utterly useless in the predicament in which she now found herself.

Later, exhaustion from uselessly pounding on the doors and walls of the drawing-room, and the realization that it might perhaps be hours, days, even weeks, before she would be released, resulted in a collapse, and she fell to the floor. Upon regaining her strength she noticed an envelope which had been thrust between the car-

pet and the bottom of the door. She picked it up, opened it, and read:

"EDNA:

"Do not think for a moment that I have felt flattered by your having chosen me as one of your victims. Your glistening eyes hold no lure for me. Your beauty is only a delusion, and a clean, serious thought never enters your mind. You may call me cynical, accuse me of deceit, and think what you please; but the dawn of a new day has come, and I shall bring justice to the Indians or be a martyr to the cause. The night you thought me drunk I only shammed for a purpose, and I have no regrets, for the relation you charge did not take place. You are in safe hands. Meals will be brought you regularly, your life will be spared, and your name as well. But I have sealed evidence that would send your father to the hangman's rope, and your reputation I could blast overnight.

Wake up, Edna! Glimpse the riches of nature, beauty everywhere. Start life anew, and you can make the world a happier place in which to live.

A TRUE AMERICAN."

For a moment she experienced the pangs of remorse. However, controlled by blood of pagan ancestors and seized with bitterness, she uttered a violent oath, and added:

"I will kill him! Dad will kill him!"

"I will kill him—damn him!"

CHAPTER XXX

MONDAY broke clear and bright. Wathena Berry was just dressing when the telephone bell rang. "Who is calling me so early?" she asked herself, as she reached for the receiver.

"Hello, Wathena," came the voice that always thrilled her.

"Oh Roger—hello," she replied excitedly. "Where are you? I've been worried—something told me you were in trouble."

"No, dear. But I'm coming over to eat breakfast with you. It may be the first and last time, Wathena."

"Roger! You frighten me!"

"I don't want to do that, sweetheart. Listen dear—I want eggs, coffee, hot waffles, syrup—can you manage all that? I'll be there in fifteen minutes."

It was so unusual she was greatly excited. He had always been too serious and busy to joke, so she promptly finished dressing, rushed into the kitchen, lighted the gas range, put several strips of bacon into a frying-pan, broke the eggs, and in the excitement dropped butter into the coffee, burned the toast, and forgot to season the waffles.

Her heart throbbed with joy at the thought of having Roger in her own home for breakfast. Bright rays of sunlight and the vision of spring flowers flooded the room. It all seemed too good to be true.

Would he actually come?

What was the news he had?

The doorbell rang, and before Wathena had time to answer Coleman walked in and went straight to the kitchen where she stood beside the stove in her freshly laundered gingham dress and little checked apron, holding a carving-fork in one hand, and a piece of burned toast in the other. Instantly she dropped the fork and toast, snatched up a towel, wiped the butter from her dainty hands, and greeted him with a kiss.

"You are beautiful as a rose this morning, Wathena," Roger said affectionately, holding her tenderly in his arms.

Wathena answered with a shy little smile as she looked up into his face, the soft wind fanning locks of Roman-gold hair across her excited face.

"Breakfast will be ready in a few minutes, Roger," she assured him, as he seated himself near the dining-table, over which was spread a blue-and-white tablecloth, and eagerly watched her nervous fingers finish preparing the morning meal. Her hands moved with lightning speed as she reached into the cabinet for the bluebird dishes and the white-handled knives and forks.

Then, as they sat down to the table and the meal was in progress, he said, "Wathena, I may never see you again."

"Oh, Roger, what has happened?" Wathena regarded him sorrowfully.

"I'm going to run for county attorney."

"Do you mean it!"

"Yes, and I intend to make my announcement at noon today, take Hickey's place, and make the speech he intended to make on election day."

"But they won't let you!"

"I have that chance to take, Wathena, and that's why I am here for a breakfast with you. It's the first one, maybe the last, for you may never see me again."

And if anything should happen, I want you to know my heart and soul were with you, and that I always loved you with a love that endures every test."

"You are taking such a chance, Roger! It frightens me."

"But I am going to do it."

"Oh, you mustn't, dear," she pleaded. "No, I won't let you. They killed papa, Hickey, caused mother's death, and they'll get you, too."

"I am not afraid."

"They won't let you win."

"Sweetheart, you don't understand. I must."

"But if you love me, you won't try it."

As breakfast was finished, "It is my duty—I am going through with it," said Coleman, rising as if to depart.

Wathena became frantic. "Oh Roger, for my sake, please don't! Please, oh please!" she cried, as she clung to his neck and began to weep. "They are sure to kill you. Oh, I know it, I know it!"

"I am not afraid to die, darling."

"Yes, but what will become of me? Oh, how I have prayed that we would be happy some day. And now you don't consider me." Then, unconscious of what she was doing, her hand quickly raced down his coat, touched something cold and smooth. In her excitement she had discovered his secret—his government badge.

It was consoling to learn at last the reason for all the strangeness of his actions. He had been sworn to secrecy by the government! Oh, he was noble, wonderful! And as she pressed the badge to her lips and kissed it, tears came to her eyes. "God bless you!" she said softly. "Go, sweetheart. I know you will win."

Roger took her in his arms and showered her with kisses, saying, "I am not sorry, Wathena, that you have

learned what I never could have told you, for you have proved to me the strength of character, love and loyalty that I have always believed you had. With your love and faith we cannot fail to win."

"Did you say—we?"

"Yes, sweetheart, it's 'we' from now on."

"I want to help you some way," she said.

"Your love and confidence are sufficient. You must not be placed in danger. Reading Hatfield's record is the only thing that is really dangerous, but I shall read it through, though they shoot me down. There was a code on Hickey's person when the body was found, and a friend of his gave me Hickey's report of Hatfield."

"It must be terrible." Wathena frowned, and her face became tense.

"Yes, a record of crime that would convict every Hatfield follower in the Kozart range," Coleman said.

"You must keep on your guard, Roger dear, for they will do anything. I have never told you nor anyone else the things that have happened to me."

"What do you mean, Wathena?"

"Promise you will forget it if I tell?"

"Certainly, if you want me to," he replied.

"Well, a man came to our house one night, pretended he was looking for a doctor, and from the way he acted I know he was intending to harm me. I jumped back in the house and slammed the door shut."

"Did you know him?"

"No, but I saw Mr. Blackburn in the car outside."

"Bob?"

"No, it was Tom. But that isn't all, Roger. Mr. Hatfield tried to attack me one night in his home when I went to ask about papa. I was afraid to tell mother, because she was slowly dying from grief, anyway. And if

they take you away, I simply don't want to live. But I know you will win, and I want to help you some way."

"It's simply that I love my country and you, dear, that I take the chance."

"Won't you tell me your plans?"

"Well, first of all—Edna has been kidnapped."

"When!"

"Saturday night. I did it."

"You, Roger! Where is she?"

"Locked in a Pullman car at Spade Siding, with a deep gulch on each side of the car, which Edna never would attempt to negotiate, even if she succeeded in breaking out of the car."

"Why did you do it?"

"She tried to blackmail me. It's a long story—I can't tell you now, Wathena. But my going to call on her was only to obtain evidence to catch her father, the vilest man in this state."

"But dear, how did you get away from her?"

"That was easy. The conductor had orders to stop at the water tank. The Pullman Edna was in was shunted onto the siding and left behind. I made an excuse and left her locked in the drawing-room. We had an airplane waiting nearby, and three hours from the time I took the train at Opatonga I was back in my Kozart office."

"What are your plans now?"

"At noon today I announce my candidacy, and tonight I meet a chief of the Osage tribe—wealthy, loyal, and a friend to the white man. He is going to announce a bravery test to take place next Saturday at the Indian pow-wow, and if I can pass the test, every voting Kozart in the Kozart country will be for me. Then, on election day I'll read the Hickey story about Hatfield, and I believe I'll win, hands down."

"What is the test?"

"It will be a barefoot race through a hot-bed of clay thirty feet long."

"But for what reason, dear?"

"It's the test the Indian must endure before he can become an Indian chief."

"But you are not an Indian, Roger."

"At heart I am at this time."

"But can you stand it?"

"Wathena dear, there's no test in the world I would not attempt if that test would help bring justice to the Indians, and I am going to drive to Opatonga this afternoon and lay my plans before Chief Bearskin."

"I will pray for you to win," Wathena said, then excitedly drew her hands to her frightened face and pressed her lips tightly together, as the door bell rang. Silence—then the bell rang more loudly. Thinking it was a neighbor—and one whom she knew to be a curious babbler as well—and that she must not be seen with a man in her home so early in the morning, Wathena nervously whispered, "Go out the back way, Roger—go quickly, dear!"

Thinking only of Wathena's reputation, and knowing the tongue of the gossiping neighbor, Coleman went out through the rear, crossed the back lot, then onto another street, got into his car, and drove back to town.

The bell rang again, and getting no response the interloper, who had heard Coleman's footsteps, glanced around the corner of the porch, and saw him as he departed. When Coleman was out of sight the man crept around the house and entered through the kitchen door, pushed it shut, and locked it as Wathena opened the door that led into the house from the front.

"Well, it looks like you had a friend for the night," said Tom Blackburn, his cruel, insolent eyes fixed upon her, with an expression that made obvious his intentions.

"What do you want?" asked Wathena, breathlessly.

"Come to eat breakfast with you and Coleman."

"Who?"

"Oh, don't try to kid me. I heard him make a date with you over the phone."

"You are insulting, Mr. Blackburn. Leave this house!"

"Insult you? Say, kiddo, insulting you wouldn't be any harder than to smile at bathing beauties on parade."

"What do you want, Mr. Blackburn?"

"Well, you see, you an' me might have a little fun," he said as he took hold her hands, pulled them behind her, with his right hand raised her chin, and kissed her roughly, his heavy growth of black beard scratching her delicate skin.

Wathena broke away from him and ran for the door. "Oh, I guess not!" growled Blackburn as he flung the door shut, locked it, and put the key into his pocket. Then he said hoarsely, "Guess you an' me are goin' to have a little party all our own. Now come on, quit your bluffin'."

"Mr. Blackburn! What on earth do you mean?"

He seized her by the arm, and pulled her to him.

"Oh, let me go! Help! Help!" she screamed, turning and twisting in an attempt to free herself from his grasp. Blackburn, with brutal force, sardonic and boastful, only laughed, and was on the verge of accomplishing his purpose, when the door bell rang once more. Blackburn muffled her mouth and held her helpless until he thought the visitor was gone. Then he picked Wathena up and began to kiss her, but she broke away, threw a book at him, and reached for a sharp letter-opener on the table. Blackburn seized her again and forced her against the bed.

"Come on now, quit your fightin'."

"You are a brute!" she cried.

He muffled her mouth again, and added, "If you scream, I'll bat you over the head with my gun. A little kiss won't hurt anybody."

"No! I won't, I tell you!"

"The hell you won't!" he growled brutally, as he twisted her arms back until she swooned and fell to the floor, unable to resist him any longer. Again he picked her up and threw her onto the bed, when there came a sound of crashing glass. Before Blackburn could loosen his hold on her and reach for his gun, Chuckwood, the Indian hermit, leaped through the broken window like a cat, lunged at Tom, whirled him to the floor, confiscating his gun, and, putting his foot on his neck, stood sternly, ready to crush the victim if he made a move.

Wathena feebly raised herself up on the bed, and as she did so Chuckwood turned his head and grinned.

After taking the shells from Blackburn's revolver, Chuckwood nodded for him to get up, then motioned with his hand for him to leave the house, pitching the gun onto the porch as Blackburn went out the door. Tom looked back ferociously at the Indian, who had taken his place at Wathena's side.

"I'll tell Mr. Coleman," Wathena said.

The Indian shook his head.

"Oh, can you hear?" Wathena asked in surprise.

Chuckwood nodded. His friendship she could not deny, and she would heed the sign and tell Roger nothing that would cause him worry.

Chuckwood went out the back way and sat down on a box near the door.

Feeling that Blackburn might have heard part of the conversation while Roger sat eating his breakfast,

Wathena telephoned and said, "Roger, I can't talk, but I'm afraid they're after you. Don't drive, take the train. Promise me, won't you? Please promise me."

"All right, sweetheart. But have you seen Chuckwood?"

"Yes—he's here."

"How long has he been there?"

"Just a little while."

"I asked him to come yesterday, and he's going to stay and protect you until election is over. Don't call me on the phone. I will see you when I can."

"All right, dear. Goodbye," and Wathena hung up.

CHAPTER XXXI

AT noon, when the streets were crowded with shoppers and office workers, Roger Coleman mounted a box in front of the City Drug Store and announced his candidacy for county attorney of Kozart, briefly but eloquently. He asked for the support of those who believed in God, law and education, and closed by saying that he was taking up the fight for the great cause endorsed by the dead *Air Mail News* editor.

"He's got a fat chance!" laughingly remarked Bob Blackburn.

"But he's no fool, boys," Al Dawson put in.

"He's the shrewdest man in Kozart," said Claud Hood.

"I told you fellows a long time ago he's a government dog, and the best thing to do is to bump him off," said Tom Blackburn defiantly.

"That's my opinion, too," agreed Mart Massey.

"He's deeper than we know, and as I said before, boys, we had better go slow on this killing business, or the government will send a thousand gunners here and wipe us all out some of these days if we don't watch out," commented Silas Hood.

"What's eatin' on you, Silas?" quizzed Tom Blackburn.

"Oh, to hell with Coleman!" snorted Hatfield.

"Sure—let him run—he won't last long. I'll beat him five to one," was Blackburn's boast.

While Hatfield and his crowd discussed the election, Roger went by airplane to Opatonga to see Chief Bearskin, who received him with the same degree of enthusiasm and ceremony as always. The chief had learned to love him as a brother, and their friendship was sacredly founded.

"They got Hickey," Coleman said solemnly as he went into conference with the Indian Chief.

"Yes," Bearskin nodded.

"Can you announce a grand prize at the pow-wow next Saturday, and let me take the fire test of an Indian chief?"

"Yes. And in two days I can spread the news, and the streets of Kozart will be jammed," the chief replied.

"And you will do all this for the sake of justice, Chief?"

"Yes—and for the sake of a maiden."

"What do you mean, Chief?"

"Wathena."

"How did you know—"

"Chuckwood told me."

"But how could he have guessed?"

"White man talk all the time, and know little. Indians talk little, but know much," replied the chief, with a fleeting smile. "But listen, my friend,—if you pass the fire test, you must not remain in Kozart next week, for Hatfield will order you killed."

"I am not afraid," said Coleman.

"But you must do as I say, and after you take the test, Chuckwood will take you to an Indian village back in the hills nearby, put oil on your feet, and in one week you will be well. I will have many Indians from all over the United States in Kozart to protect you election day."

"I'll do exactly as you say, Chief."

"Now remember," said the chief, "when you take the

test, you must keep your eyes open, lips closed; and no matter how badly your feet are burned, or how great the suffering, you must not frown, groan or show the slightest evidence of pain. And when you pass that test, every Indian in the state will praise you and love you."

"There is one thing, Chief, that I regret."

"What is it?"

"I wish I had Indian blood in my veins."

The chief looked long and steadily into Coleman's keen blue eyes, then he broke the silence by inquiring gently, "Well, my friend, would you really be proud to be part Indian?"

"Nothing but the love of Wathena could make me happier," replied Coleman.

"Then it shall be."

"I don't understand you," said Coleman, bewildered.

"Well, my brother, your father married twice, and you are the son of his second wife."

"Who was she?"

"My own niece, Monita Bearskin," the chief replied.

"What! Then I am really part Indian?"

"Yes—an Osage."

Coleman stood rigid, his eyes fairly glistening, and his heart throbbing for joy.

"Thank God! Now I will go through hell to win that election."

Two days later all the newspapers in the Kozart country and in other sections of the state came out with announcements that the last of the Indian pow-wows in the Kozart range would be held in an open field near Kozart on Saturday, November third, and that a new automobile would be awarded the winner of the fire test.

Rumors spread fast that Roger Coleman was to take the test.

"It's a tenderfoot trap, and his bones will be ashes before he goes ten feet," said Al Dawson.

"What makes the fool want to try it?" inquired Mart Massey.

"He's been readin' the Bible," sneered Hood.

"Sure, and he thinks it won't burn."

"But if he should succeed?" asked Silas Hood.

"Not a chance!" Claud replied.

"But what if he does?" persisted Silas.

"Well, fellows," broke in Bob Blackburn, "I've seen the Kozarts do it, and I can do anything that any rotten skunk of an Indian can do."

"No use kiddin' yourself, Bob. You'd never get away with it, and you know it."

"What do you think, Jake?" Bob asked.

"Well, boys, let me tell you—if that slick Coleman stands the test, he'll get every Indian vote in the Kozart country."

"But what about the half-breeds and whites? We got 'em all sewed up," Massey added.

"Don't be too sure of that," Tate Wheeler broke in. "That fool Hickey made many friends here, and some of the whelps will vote for Coleman."

"Don't cross the bridge before you get to it. There's always a way," Bob Blackburn retorted, as he winked at Hatfield.

"You mean burn the bridge after you cross to keep the other fellows out, don't you?" Tate Wheeler suggested.

Blackburn only laughed.

The group left the bank and walked over to the City Drug Store, encountering Coleman on the sidewalk. "How's the Indian today?" was Blackburn's sarcastic question.

"You mean Chuckwood?"

"No—you."

"Kind of wish I were sometimes, Tom," Coleman replied, as he noted the insolent stare Blackburn gave him.

"What do you know of law, anyway?" Claud Hood asked Coleman.

"It may surprise you, Claud, to know that I studied law four years, and was admitted to the bar before going overseas to fight for America."

"Well, you've got a bigger fight on now than when you went overseas, let me tell you that."

"The bigger, the better," returned Coleman promptly.

"But listen, Coleman. We fellows like you. Why do you take a chance of those birds bumping you off, as they probably will?"

"Did you say 'they'?"

"Yes, they will."

"Why not be truthful, Claud, and say 'we' instead?"

Undismayed at the insinuation, Claud said, "Well, Coleman, suicide would be a whole lot easier,—but it's your life, not mine."

"Sure as hell they'll get you," Hood added.

"Well," said Coleman, "when you shoot, Claud, be sure to take good aim, for it will be your last chance."

"Why accuse me?"

"I am living and learning. Blackburn is only existing and deteriorating—that's all, Claud. And besides, no one who disbelieves in God and law should rule over the ignorant class."

"Oh, you don't understand, Claud," Tom Blackburn drawled out. "Wathena's a religious nut. Coleman's been spending the nights with her, and he's got the fever."

Coleman's face darkened with anger. "By the God who gave me life and soul!" he cried, "I will cease to exist before I yield to barbarians and listen to such insult-

ing remarks about any white woman! You are a liar, Blackburn! And if you ever mention that young lady again, one or both of us will fall dead the moment your tongue moves—you understand?"

Blackburn reached for his gun.

Hood stepped between the two men.

"Give him room," said Coleman. "He couldn't hit the side of a barn with a shotgun."

Massey rushed into the drug store, exclaiming, "Damned if Coleman's not getting nervy!"

"Yes, and that boy means what he says, too," said Silas Hood.

"I'll bump him off election day," Tom Blackburn whispered to Hatfield.

During the next few days Coleman refused to discuss the election, but seemed absorbed in his oil lease business, appearing so unconcerned about Blackburn that the latter was a target for the jesters.

As a matter of fact, many people doubted that Coleman would attempt the fire test, nor did they believe he had a chance of winning the election. For this the Hatfield group could fake.

Meanwhile, the Blackburns and Hatfield laid plans not only to defeat Coleman at the pow-wow, but also at the election polls ten days hence.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE day of the pow-wow arrived, and crowds began to assemble. Gay cowboys in high-heeled boots, oil promoters, farmers, Indians, gamblers, clerks and stenographers from Shatoga stores, a society group from Opatonga. Some of the people smiled, while others stared solemnly at the wrinkled-faced red men standing around. It was the last pow-wow to be held in the Kozart country, and one to test the courage of men.

Roping, riding, arrow-shooting and other exhibitions of skill filled the morning program, while for mid-afternoon the test for becoming an Indian Chief was scheduled.

The trench had been dug so that the contestants would face the sun as they entered. It was thirty feet in length, four feet wide, three feet deep, and the walls and bottom had been packed and stamped with wet red clay. For three days and nights dry hickory logs had been continually piled in this ditch and kept burning until the floors and walls were a smouldering bed of heat.

A great crowd had gathered to watch the spectacular test. At one end of the trench sat Bearskin, dressed in an elaborate buckskin suit covered with tassels and beads, and on his head a diadem of fancy eagle feathers. On his wrists he wore wide hammered silver bracelets, and from his coat sleeves dangled leather tassels, entwined with many beads.

He presided over the ceremony, and was the sole judge. He arose and raised his right arm to a height de-

cidedly above his broad shoulder, and with a wave of his hand signalled to the six Indian guards near the calorific trench. They slowly marched down and stood in front of Big Chief, receiving instructions, and with long wooden rakes brushed away the hot coals, leaving a hell-path over which the men would run in their bare feet.

Tom-toms beat, Indian music began, the excited crowd pressed closely, all eyes stared.

East of the ditch stood Bob Blackburn, Roger Coleman, two Choctaws and Chuckwood, the aged Osage hermit. There were also present several ambitious reporters, screen directors, and photographers with clicking cameras.

One of the Choctaws was the first to discard his shoes and socks and dash into the hell-bed, but he ran only a distance of about six feet when he emerged from the pit to the surface in pain and agony. Cat-calls and hisses came from the excited crowd.

Then the second half-breed attempted the barefoot run over the hot-bed of clay, only to leave the ditch at the halfway mark and tumble out into the crowd.

Others tried and failed. Next came Bob Blackburn, who, instead of failing in the daring feat, with stoical indifference and a bold expression on his face slowly trotted into the hot trench and passed through without the slightest sign of pain. He stepped out, went around the crowd to the starting-place, and, smiling sarcastically, sat down.

Wathena's lingering hope for Coleman's election faded from her heart.

A special surprise feature had been announced for the daring race, which proved to be an exhibition by the Osage hermit, Chuckwood. Despite his age, he dashed through the ditch with lightning rapidity, and proved his fleetness of foot and undaunted nerve. Great excitement pre-

veiled, and cameras clicked vigorously, while the curious onlookers applauded him for his bravery.

All eyes now stared at Roger Coleman, who had been astonished at Blackburn's success. Fearless, and thinking only of his duty to the government and his love for Wathena, erect and serious, he slowly entered the hot-bed. Although smoke and the odor of scorched flesh ascended from his burning feet, he pursued the entire length of the fiery path, and stepped out of the trench without moving a muscle of his face. Then he gazed at Chief Bearskin and breathed a sigh of relief as he fell to the ground. The multitude broke loose in pandemonium.

Chief Bearskin arose, and all eyes stared as he lifted his left hand to his chin, closed his thumb and last two fingers, then with the first and second fingers spread apart pointed to Blackburn and said, "Akosa-fa." It was the Indian sign for a double-tongue; and the redskins gave warlike moans, for Blackburn had plastered the soles of his feet with creosote before entering the pit. The prize car was awarded to Coleman.

As the day came to a close, clouds of gloom spread over the Hatfield followers. In the stores, on the streets, in picture shows, everywhere in Kozart, Coleman's name was heard. Most of those who opposed Blackburn spoke only in whispers to intimate friends, for they knew, by past experience, that impending danger lurked in the shadows of Kozart homes.

"They will get Coleman," said Doctor Justice dolefully, to his friend and guest, a screen magnate from the Pacific Coast.

"You mean they will kill him?"

"Without a doubt," answered the doctor gloomily.

"Well, it looks to me as if the Indians were through with this bunch of cut-throats," remarked the picture-man.

"Hatfield controls this country like a king," Justice explained.

"But Coleman has made himself a hero today."

"That makes no difference."

"I have never seen such boldness," the movie magnate said.

"It's nothing new around Kozart."

"But the very idea of a white man trying to beat the Indian at his own game, and trying to fake, as that fellow Blackburn did!" the screen-man said. "Blackburn's a fool—that's what I think," he added.

"It's the same old story, Sam. When men reach a certain stage of financial and political supremacy, they resort to crude, ridiculous methods. You see, these men have never known anything but lawlessness as far back as they can be traced. Their ancestors lived that way, ignored education, made and obeyed their own laws.

"Some day, Doc, I am going to produce an educational film regarding the Indians."

Justice's eyes brightened. "It would awaken the American people," he said.

"The truth would be more gripping than fiction, I suppose?" the picture-man questioned.

"I should say it would!" replied Justice.

"Well, I'm going back to California, call a directors' meeting, and within six months we will be shooting the biggest western picture we have ever attempted. And furthermore," the screen-man went on to say, "I certainly hope Roger Coleman wins the election next Saturday."

"Not a chance. Only a miracle will save Coleman," Justice said despondently. "I am afraid there is no such luck, Sam. But I'll see you in California next summer, anyway."

Three days elapsed, and Coleman had not been seen, nor had anyone heard where he went following the contest of which he was the winner, other than that someone drove him away in the new automobile which had been awarded by Chief Bearskin. On Thursday Claud Hood remarked that Coleman would never show up election day.

"Why not?" said Wheeler.

"Ask Jake—he knows."

"But the bird's no coward, Claud. And what if he does show up Saturday?"

"But he won't."

"Oh hell! If he does, I'll bump him off," said Tom Blackburn, "I can do it with a Winchester from my office window, and no one will see me."

"But boys, we gotta go slow. I tell you we're on the verge of civil war right now with those damned Indians. And if we bump Coleman off, the skunks will go on the warpath to the last man, and they'll burn every home in Kozart over night. Coleman's got us licked, that's all there is to it," Al Dawson declared.

"Then what can we do?" asked Hood.

"Hell! Get the dogs drunk, and keep 'em away from the polls," Hatfield supplied.

"Why not stuff the ballot boxes?" asked Massey.

"Can you do it?" asked Hood.

"Can a hungry hog eat corn?" Massey replied. "I'll make duplicate boxes, stuff one of 'em, put Coleman's friends on the count, and Claud can arrest them just before the polls close. It's a cinch."

"Good idea," Hatfield agreed. "Go to it!"

"Yes, and if Coleman shows up and talks like Hickey did, then I'm in favor of stopping him—war or no war with these red dogs," Claud snapped out.

"What do you say, Jake?" asked Tom Blackburn.

"Fill him full of lead if he starts making personal accusations," snarled Hatfield.

Blackburn smiled, extracted his gun, and turned it over in his hand, eyeing it like a baby admiring a Christmas toy.

CHAPTER XXXIII

IT was Saturday morning, November tenth—election day. Thin clouds flanked the sky, and the breezeless atmosphere was more like that of sultry summer than of fall. As storekeepers and employees flocked through the streets on their way to work, they saw the most unusual spectacle they had ever beheld in Kozart. Someone during the night had decorated store windows, telegraph and light poles with a profuse display of bunting entwined with stars and stripes. Fancy balloons, flags and brightly-colored streamers were strung on wires across the street and on large banners, figures of frogs, turtles, hearts and arrows were painted in rich Indian colors. People stopped to stare in astonishment.

“What does it mean?” asked one.

“It’s Coleman’s idea,” said another.

As early as nine o’clock the streets and sidewalks were filled with Indians and the majority of the white population of the Kozart range. It looked as though all the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks and Seminoles of the state were present, and they came dressed in their most ornamental trappings.

As the noon hour approached, among the fantastically painted crowd, to the surprise of many, there were entirely strange faces, for Kickapoos had come from Kansas. Navajos and Hopis from Arizona, Utes from Colorado, a few Crows and Blackfoot from Montana, Pueblos and Apaches from New Mexico, and a group of Shoshone and Arapahoes from Wyoming.

When Hatfield, Silas Hood and Bob Blackburn drove down to the bank and emerged from Hatfield's car, Hatfield turned and surveyed the unusual multitude. He was engulfed in anger and resentment, and could only think of having Coleman killed.

"We're in for a battle," said Hood.

"The votes are what count," Jake replied.

"And don't forget," Bob Blackburn added, "that in order to exercise the rights of suffrage, Indians must comply with the conditions equally required of other voters, and be denied the privilege of voting if they have failed to comply with the requirements of the damned law as to registration."

"We can destroy the court record, and by claiming they are not legally married and have not paid their taxes or registered, eliminate half the Indian voters," suggested Hood.

"Yes, but what does such a crowd mean?" asked Hatfield.

"Damned if I understand it! Strange Indians from other tribes are here," Bob Blackburn said.

"Maybe the government dogs brought 'em here," Silas Hood suggested.

"Coleman's the damned skunk that brought them!" Hatfield exploded.

"A machine gun will scatter them like cattle," Bob Blackburn said curtly.

"You're dead wrong," snapped back Wheeler. "I was in the service. I saw the Kozarts fight in France. Believe me, man, they'll go through hell. Don't ever get the idea that any Indian is a coward."

Presently Claud Hood and Tom Blackburn came to the bank.

"What d'ye think of the circus?" asked Hatfield.

"It's got me guessing. I never knew there were so many Indians in all the world," replied Claud Hood.

"Want me to bump Coleman off?" asked Tom Blackburn.

"Yes, if he talks too damn much."

"But Tom will have to make plans, Jake. Say yes or no," suggested Hood.

Hatfield winked at Blackburn, who understood.

Hood and Blackburn went out and make a survey of the crowd, deciding that the shot should be fired from a second-story window in the building adjoining the City Drug Store, opposite the Hatfield Bank.

The platform upon which Coleman was to speak had been erected the preceding day. It was about twenty-four feet in length, twelve feet wide, and three feet from the ground, so as to give the speaker a clear vision over the mass of people. Six chairs had been placed in the rear of the stand, then back to back near the edge, on each of the other three sides of the sturdy platform, were chairs—six facing the speaker and six facing the crowd. In the center of the open stage stood a table, and on it a pitcher of water, a glass and a Bible.

In front and on both sides of the platform was a solid mass of chairs, which the surging crowd had filled before the town clock had struck twelve. Besides these there were boxes and benches, and all were occupied. Nearby upper-story windows also were crammed and jammed with onlookers, and all available stairways were filled. Even on the roofs men sat or stood. A block away, on tall boxes, running-boards and automobile tops, excited men and women awaited the arrival of Roger Coleman. Rowdy men and half-breeds were vociferous, while the Indians present, like statues of stone, preserved a Sphinx-like silence.

Jake Hatfield, Silas Hood and his brother Claud were the first to mount the platform, taking seats in chairs behind the speaker's table, while Mart Massey, Al Dawson and Bob Blackburn closely followed and moved into chairs that would face the speaker.

It was obvious that evil lurked in the minds of the Hatfield group, as indicated by their expressions and the greetings accorded them from various sections of the nervous multitude. The scene on the stage, to those who knew, was of typical bad men in citizens' clothes. Hatfield, with malicious black eyes that matched a heavily bearded but neatly cropped face; Bob Blackburn, tall, thin, conservatively dressed in dark blue, but every move betraying the cruelty of his heart; Al Dawson, blond, blustering, always conspicuously dressed; and the anæmic Massey, small of stature, with insolent eyes—all peered intently. Tate Wheeler and Nick Patterson were sitting near.

The moment they seated themselves on the platform, out among the assembled mass arose six Indians, who, with stern and impressive faces, walked directly to the platform and mounted it. Three seated themselves in chairs facing the speaker's table, while the other three sat in chairs which faced the crowd.

Instead of the usual regalia, these men wore tight-fitting buckskin suits of brown, on which no beads or tassels appeared. A red and black checked blanket carelessly hung from the shoulders of each, on their heads were bands of many feathers, and each had an American flag and carried two loaded revolvers in his belt.

No sooner had the Indians seated themselves than from out among the crowd six strange white men arose and went forward and sat down in the other vacant chairs on the stage.

The first man was small, and had sunken but stern eyes; the second was middle-aged and looked the part of a traveling-man; the third was tall, with somber eyes that looked straight ahead; the fourth was medium in size, with a radiant smile; the fifth was young, in a salt-and-pepper suit with a belted back; the sixth was of the Roosevelt type, in khaki suit, with keen, observant eyes.

Hatfield turned to Hood, Bob Blackburn squirmed, Al Dawson grinned sardonically, and Massey slumped in his seat.

"Who are they?" inquired Silas Hood.

"Never saw them before," was the reply.

True to their heredity and to the laws they had made and obeyed for years among themselves, the Hatfield followers had come prepared to battle with both brain and gun, and out among the motley crowd hundreds of men sat or stood ready to follow any signal given them by Claud Hood, Hatfield's trusted leader.

Coleman had left no stone unturned in his investigations. By previous arrangement, his superior officer, a man whose knowledge of the Indian was complete, had agreed to help him. Presently a tall, stately, dark-skinned fellow mounted the platform, and in a clear tone said: "I am here with a message from the dead. These men on the platform are from our office and have instructions to shoot to kill any person who attempts to interfere with a government man."

Hood pinched Hatfield, who nervously twisted in his seat.

Al Dawson smiled. Massey's lower lip went forward with a splenetic expression, while Claud Hood and Bob Blackburn contemptuously stared.

Presently another strange man with an impressive face, square jaw and piercing gray eyes, mounted the

stage and began to make Indian signs. With gestures of his arms and many movements of his fingers, he talked in the language of the Kozart tribes. Then, for the benefit of the Indians from distant states, he also made signs in the languages of the Apaches, Sioux, Comanches, Arapahoes, and other tribes, leaving no doubt in the minds of the multitude that he was fully familiar with the ways of the Indians.

"Ladies and Gentlemen": the stranger began.

"You have a country rich in ore, timber, oil and fertile soil. Yet many parts of this state have remained dormant for years, due to an unscrupulous, dominating group, who, at the expense of the Indians' welfare, have amassed fortunes and have become the most powerful commercial and iniquitous political organization in the country. Never since the Nations became a state, represented by a star in our glorious flag, have you so needed a fearless and enthusiastic leader who will direct and protect your business, your homes, schools and children. Your next county attorney should be a loyal, unselfish man, not lacking in moral courage, but brave and unswerving in the demands for obedience to all laws, and the enforcement of justice to mankind.

"Roger Coleman is such a man. He knows law, is an educated man, believes in God and the teachings of the Holy Bible. And, without these fundamentals and principles, no country or nation can stand long, for the wrath of God Almighty will wipe it out. When Roger Coleman reached the Kozart country a year ago, he came in the name of justice. I sent him here because I believed he was the man the Kozart people needed.

"The thought of public office, however, did not enter Coleman's mind until two weeks ago, but the day Chuckwood stumbled over a dead body while hunting his horse,

Coleman resolved to take the slain editor's place. A few days ago you saw Roger Coleman dash through a heated bed of hard clay until his feet were burned to the bone. It was a heroic act which proved his courage, and if he is elected he will, with that same courage, unflinchingly lead the battle for justice."

Continuing to make signals as he spoke, he said: "Elect him! Then later send him to the governor's chair. It will bring justice to all the people in the Kozart country, and to every resident of this state, and if he needs them I will furnish him a thousand men to help administer the law. I am Captain Lonnie Mitchell of Washington, and I take great pleasure in presenting Roger Coleman."

The Indians yelled, flags waved, people rose shouting from their seats, when, from the rear of the platform, sprang Roger Coleman, bowing amid the great applause.

Jake Hatfield's face turned ghastly white, Mart Massey's body seemed to shrink, Silas Hood winced under the tense strain, his brother Claud gritted his teeth, Bob Blackburn reached for his gun, only to have his arm seized by Al Dawson, who said, "Use your head, not your gun." Speechless, Wathena Berry stood, a pretty, youthful figure, in the City Drug Store across the street, watching every move.

It was a drama, tense with human interest and mystery, resembling a gorgeous moving picture scene or the brilliant setting of a play. Nor was it all a Coleman crowd, for there were many hisses and cat-calls. The noise subsided only when Coleman raised his hand in signal for quiet. Slowly, distinctly and fearlessly he began:

"Ladies and Gentlemen:

"For more than a year I have lived in your community and daily witnessed the shameful condition into which this country has fallen. The history of this range is replete

with tales more thrilling and dramatic than were ever created by the magic of fiction, tales of wrong inflicted by a man upon his fellowmen, heartaches and human suffering; and greatest of all these wrongs are those suffered by the Indians.

"The good Indian harms no one. He has always lived a peaceful life. It is only when someone enters his home, robs him, beats him or deceives him that the spirit calls him to fight and protect himself. The Indians were in the Kozart Nation long before the white man came. They settled in peaceful little valleys, or on the hillsides of mountain ranges, and there were content. The Kozart country was so isolated from the outside world, the red men thought they would never be molested and here they would live in peace. But before the nations were all combined into a state, a man who was a master over human souls entered the country and began a reign more heartless than that of Nero——"

Coleman paused. The silence of the crowd, the craning of necks, the breathless intensity shown in the faces of the people before him were proof that he was holding them spellbound.

Continuing, he said:

"There is a contaminating class of politicians whose personal interests are far greater to them than the good of the nation itself. This minority is under dictatorial rule. That condition must be broken, that minority must be driven from power if life is to be safe in Kozart. One plot and scheme has followed another, until the Kozart Indians have been swindled out of nearly every earthly thing they possessed, their resistance sapped and their lives imperiled. They can no longer stand the strain, but slowly totter and vanish from the earth—all that the grafters might be swept from obscurity to fame, fortune and power. I refer to the Kozart political machine.

"Propaganda goes out, and the public gets the idea that schools and all Indian agents are aiding the red men, and these reports tend to make the people ignore the plea of the helpless Indian. The appalling neglect, contemptible treatment and shameful tactics used in the treatment of the Indians by some politicians and business men, once properly disclosed to the public, would set a million tongues wagging, and red-blooded men would rise up in indignation to aid the people whose forefathers, in advance of Columbus, discovered the richest, grandest country on the globe.

"Only ten days ago the American flag was floating from its staff at the corner of the Hatfield Bank. A few men stood at attention when the flag was unfurled, and the band played the national anthem. But there were others than patriots there. The flag was pulled down, men trampled it beneath muddy feet as they raised bottles of whiskey to their lips, and shouted for the re-election of the county attorney, whose financial success emanates from the swindling of the people. It is almost unbelievable that such disloyalty and anarchy should exist right here in Kozart, and that any citizen should want to retain or re-elect a man who ignores the law and offers no protection to the people——"

From out in the crowd came shouts, "He's good enough for me!" "Sure, Blackburn's all right!"

"Yes!" shouted Coleman, "All right for the criminals and grafting politicians and despoilers of the Indians. And the vilest criminal of them all is the promoter of crime, the financial wizard who sits back of a mahogany desk, who enjoys the luxuries of a king, who poses as a respectable citizen. If you cast a single vote today for the present prosecutor, you are voting for a criminal such as I have just described. Back of every movement Blackburn makes there stands in reality the form of Jake Hat-

field, the most contemptible, selfish and dangerous character who ever walked the streets of Kozart——”

Coleman's oratory was a surprise to those who had known him only as a broker; and as the man who had introduced him made rapid Indian signs with his hands, giving the uneducated red men the speech almost word for word, old-timers gasped and mumbled, “He will never leave the stage alive.”

Bob Blackburn again reached for his gun, but Dawson seized his hand. For a moment Hatfield lost his iron control. “You're a lying dog!” he shouted, as he rose to his feet, but quickly resumed his seat when he looked into the barrel of a revolver in the hands of the Rooseveltian seated near.

Claud Hood's hand quickly left his holster when he glanced ahead, to the right, then to the left, and saw the determined expressions of the strange men who faced the table and the crowd, in tiers of three.

Coleman, now reaching the apex of his dramatic appeal, said:

“Over twenty years ago in Lazy Point, Kentucky, Jake Hatfield owned a country store, in which swung this sign beneath a cedar rafter, that all who entered might read it and abide by the law and belief of a pagan——” Pausing a moment, from the inner pocket of his coat Coleman withdrew a roll of paper, carefully unwrapped it, and from the faint but still legible lettering on an old piece of dingy oilcloth, he read: “We don't believe in God. We don't believe in education. We make and obey our own laws, and if you don't like our ways, don't let the sun go down on you here.”

“And this,” shouted Coleman at the top of his voice, “is the life Hatfield has lived ever since! He had defied every moral and civil law of mankind——”

"You damned scoundrel!" shrieked Hatfield.

"Where did he get that sign?" asked Hood in a whisper.

"From that fool Hickey," Hatfield shot back.

"When?"

"Hell! I don't know."

"Then Coleman is a government dog, too!"

"Worse—he fooled us," Hatfield snarled.

The men on the platform eyed Hood and Hatfield closely.

Each moment was growing more tense.

"Where the hell is Tom?" inquired Hood nervously.

"He's in an office across the street," Hatfield whispered.

"Is he prepared?"

"Hell, yes!"

"Can you give him the signal?"

"No, but I told him to shoot if Coleman started to relate actual deeds."

Stepping over near the edge of the platform that faced the crowd, and with upstretched hands, Coleman said: "Unless the people of Kozart awaken to this serious situation, defeat Blackburn and crush the Hatfield power now and forever, this part of the state will be thrown into a state of anarchy by the man who does not believe in God, law or education. And let me tell you," he went on to say, "among the crimes Hatfield is personally responsible for was the killing of Ed Dixon, Hatfield's own child by a Creole slave. On the dead body of Hickey was a note that told of Luke Berry's confession, and——"

The statement went unfinished, for a shot rang out.

From across the street and through a window, Tom Blackburn had followed his brother's instructions and fired point blank at Coleman's heart.

Hatfield and Blackburn did not move. The Hood brothers lounged in their seats with innocent stares, anaemic Massey fell from his chair and shook with fear. Wathena swooned and lurched from her drug store window-seat unconscious, unnoticed by the many people in the store.

Great crowds moaned and rose to their feet. But at the sound of the gun, instead of falling dead, Coleman stood calmly smiling. He raised both hands and shouted, "Take better aim next time!"

A group of Indians sprang from their seats and clambered through the crowd, and up the stairway to the room from where the shot had been fired, but before they reached the top there was a crashing of glass, and Tom Blackburn hurtled through the window to crumple on the sidewalk with a broken leg and arm. Out of the window above peered Chuckwood, whose primitive instinct and knowledge of men had taken him up the back way to the room. He had crept up behind and clutched Blackburn's throat as he raised his gun to fire, and was there now grinning and blinking his eyes.

Perceiving that Coleman was unhurt and Blackburn injured, the Coleman followers calmly resumed their seats, while a group of Hatfield's aides carried Blackburn away.

His voice steady, and undismayed at the attempted assassination, Coleman continued:

"The mercy of God is greater than all other powers in the world. Hatfield dynamited his own derrick to get rid of four honest men; rocks were tied around the neck of Gordon Haines, and he was thrown into a deep running stream. Lizzie Wewoka, Ed Green, Henry Novac and Minnie Bryant were poisoned and left in the woods to die. Hatfield personally directed the swindling of In-

dians, and the loading of them into box cars when they were taken to Old Mexico. He did not know that disguised in the car was Doc Hickey, who rode all the way and saw the torture endured by the red men, and even himself received a kick and a broken rib as a parting gift from Hatfield as he entered the car. As I stand here and think about the balancing, I say to myself: 'The law is inexorable, sooner or later every man's reckoning day will come.' For twenty years Luke Berry was Hatfield's trusted companion. He made a killer out of him, but Luke never failed to do his master's bidding. Luke was good at heart—it was his heredity and Hatfield who committed the crimes. He was Hatfield's slave, and he refused but one request—to kill Doc Hickey. And as a consequence Hatfield had Luke Berry killed."

Coleman's lips trembled, his voice choked, as he raised his voice and said: "Of all the cowardly crimes and brutal deeds in Hatfield's carmine career, the most revolting are—the killing of Doc Hickey and the seduction of Blanche Okema at fourteen, under alluring promises, keeping her as his mistress for twelve years, then having her body burned."

Pausing again, pitching his voice to its highest note, he went on: "Hickey's real name was Bryant Okema, and Blanche was his own sister and of pure Osage blood. Doc Hickey came here, not only to avenge his sister's death, but to aid his people at the sacrifice of his life. If you want Hatfield for county attorney, vote for Blackburn. If you elect me, I'll bring law and order and justice to this range, and I'll punish Hatfield for every known crime he has committed."

As Coleman spoke the last word, he quickly divested himself of coat and shirt. The gaping crowd beheld an

Indian arrow on his breast. Raising his right arm, he pointed to the other marks branded on his body by the medicine man when he was only a child.

Pandemonium broke loose, resounding for blocks, and five thousand clamorous voices were drowned under the jangle of four brass bands playing the same selection simultaneously from four separate sections of the tremendous crowd.

Yet even more intense were the moments to come.

CHAPTER XXXIV

NO one knew whether tragedy would follow the day's dramatic events, or whether a new power would spring from Coleman's effort. But all who watched the crowds listening with deathlike stillness to the dynamic appeal could not deny he had held the multitude spell-bound. Even many of the Hatfield followers were swayed. The Indians seemed happier than they had ever been since the state was thrown open to settlement by the whites.

Hatfield and his henchmen, stunned by the blow, hurriedly left while Roger Coleman was lifted to the shoulders of the crowd, who carried him safely to his office.

Immediately the Hatfield group assembled in the bank. Hatfield, wild with rage at the volcanic turn of events, growled, "Tom certainly made a hell of a mess of his agreement."

"It's too bad," commented Claud Hood.

"Bad, hell!" ejaculated Dawson. "You're as crazy as a drunken half-breed. We're damn lucky to be alive. If Tom's bullet had hit Coleman we'd all be dead as door-nails."

"I guess we're whipped," bemoaned Hood.

"Whipped, hell!" retorted Patterson. "We've got the ballot-box stuffed. Give these Indians an hour's time, and they'll forget that speech. Only one out of fifty of the skunks understood what Coleman said."

"The hell they didn't! Didn't you see that duck that

introduced Coleman talking to them in Indian signs?" Dawson reminded him.

Hatfield's anger only increased.

"The votes are what count," remarked Massey.

"But Coleman has won the white votes," added Paterson.

"I don't think so," said Bob Blackburn.

"By God! You never know when you're licked, do you?" asked Silas Hood.

"I don't accept a beating," said Bob, emphatically.

"Then why not take on old Chuckwood?" Dawson asked with an attempt at humor.

"Go to hell!" was Blackburn's bitter answer, as he recalled how the aged Indian had sprawled his brother Tom on the day Hickey's body was found.

The voting place was in a vacant store that adjoined the bank, the wall between being broken by a door through which the intimate Hatfield group went to cast their votes.

Scores of women had ventured downtown and stood in the doorways, hallways and sat in window-sills watching for the election returns. Speculation was rife as to the outcome.

Presently the polls opened, and the leaders on Hatfield's side were loud in their acclaim of a sweeping victory; but groups of two, four and six, who before election had been on intimate terms with the Hatfield crowd, now walked in, cast their ballots, went out, and either left for home or sought to quench their thirst, for the day was an unusually sultry one for the season of the year.

Coleman, with newly-made friends, sat complacently in his office, while the excited and sympathetic crowd loitered around.

Wathena by this time had learned that Coleman was unhurt by the shot from Tom Blackburn's gun, and her

piquant little face radiated joy as she clicked the cash-register keys, for the City Drug Store was filled with customers and the soda dispensers were kept busy.

The change in the public attitude from that of the day before had been so swift, relentless and complete, that it had stunned the minds of the politicians. While the voting was in progress, Hatfield, Bob Blackburn and Silas Hood remained in the bank, pondering and worrying over the future. But Massey, Patterson and Al Dawson, their ruse complete, took easy money in bets from the credulous, who felt Coleman would be elected.

Claud Hood and his lieutenants were kept busy trying to handle the crowds, for they were curious and restless. There was something strange about the weather. Not the faintest breath of air was stirring, the heat was intense, and extreme humidity prevailed. Few had noted the clouds which had been forming queerly all the afternoon. As the sultry sun began to sink toward the distant horizon, the atmosphere became dense, sticky, curiously silent and sickening, like that which often precedes a violent storm.

Presently a large sheet of white paper appeared beneath a swinging shade on the window of the voting room. "Blackburn is leading," it read. This caused the restless crowds to mill in the streets like herds of cattle threatening to stampede. But they refused to leave until the final count. Suddenly someone noticed a peculiarly-shaped cloud forming in the southwest.

"It's a twister," Massey said.

"Might be a Kansas cyclone," Hood suggested.

"Looks like a tornado to me," Dawson declared.

In all the years since the birth of Kozart, in its growth from a one-tent town to its present metropolitan status, with its population of thousands, it had never been in the path of a death-dealing storm, although in other towns in

the state—at one time or another, twisters had swept everything before them. Now, as the coal-black, funnel-shaped cloud moved, twisted, turned and came nearer, people began to run and scatter in all directions.

Someone yelled, "Tornado!" and at the entrance to a crowded picture theatre there was a mad scramble for the sidewalk. Men, women and children fell over one another in the wild confusion. Once outside, at sight of the fast-approaching cloud, they dashed for houses, basements and storm-cellar.

The sun, now setting, appeared an acorn of mystic flames, a greenish-blue haze flared in the air, and the black cloud in the southwest was rising and falling as though suspended on mighty springs.

Hatfield and his cohorts were in the bank, and knew nothing of the storm, as they waited for the final count to be posted on the window. Presently the sign was displayed, "Blackburn wins five to one."

Wathena Berry had been waiting and eagerly watching for the returns, and, despite her knowledge of the cloud, she remained watching the second floor of the building in which Coleman had his office, in deep sympathy for the man she loved. Her small body rigid, she flamed in indignation as she saw the count.

But the applause brought Dawson to his feet, as Massey, Patterson and other Hatfield intimates entered the voting room and began to laud Bob Blackburn on his reelection. Going to the rear of the store, Dawson raised the shade, saw the cloud, and exclaimed, "Tornado, boys! Close the front door. She's a fierce one."

"It's headed this way!" Patterson added.

"To hell with the storm! I hope it cripples every Indian in Kozart," said Hatfield.

"Let the damn thing come," Claud laughed.

"Hell! She can't rock the walls of my building," Hatfield blustered in the security of his own conceit.

"A Kozart tornado?" Dawson questioned.

"Hell no! And no other kind," scoffed Hatfield.

"Ever see one?" Massey asked him.

"No, but it won't frighten me."

"Well, Jake, they rip towns wide open. I'm hunting a hole," Massey said, rushing from the building and starting toward his home.

"We'd better get out of here," declared Dawson.

"Are you a coward, Al?"

"No, Jake, but I've been in a tornado."

"Tornado hell! Let her come!"

"That cloud's a she-devil! We'd better start praying," Dawson declared with a sort of half grin and expression of fear.

"To hell with this God stuff!" Hatfield said brazenly. "Come on with your storm, you damned God!" he cried, with a boisterous voice, and a challenging upstretched hand.

Hardly had the words left his lips before the tornado struck the southwest section of the city, wrecking everything before it. The center of the atmospheric pressure was so low that as the dark, devastating cloud shot through houses they seemed to explode, and buildings were moved from their foundations and torn down like children's toys. As it reached the business portion of the city, Kozart quaked and trembled. Buildings were twisted and laid low, roofs forced from their rafters and smashed into splinters. Automobiles were crushed by the falling of heavy timbers, bricks and mortar lay all around. Life and property were swept from their moorings, as Nature cleared her balance sheet. Moans, shrieks and pathetic appeals came from the crippled, panic-stricken people,

who were unable or too badly frightened to reach places of safety. The streets were strewn with bodies.

The Hatfield building, the strongest and last to go down, was completely wrecked, leaving Bob Blackburn badly bruised, Silas Hood with one leg broken and one arm useless, his brother Claud's dead body near him, Massey with a broken shoulder, Nick Patterson crippled for life, Dawson in excruciating pain. Coleman was not to be found by Chuckwood and Wathena, who were frantically searching for his body in the tangled debris.

Of all the political crowd, Jake Hatfield alone was unhurt, and he was clambering to a place of safety, thinking of no one but himself as he climbed over dead bodies and passed the wounded, without the slightest effort to aid them, despite their pathetic moans. He kicked an Indian squaw in the face because she raised her hand and was in the way to clearance. He ignored the pitiful plea of a little boy begging to be released from some heavy timbers that were slowly crushing out his life. But hardly had he passed the dying lad when the great black clouds began to marshal their squadrons, lightnings flashed and gleamed, while their fiery edges smote through condensing vapors, and the tornado took an abrupt turn, bounding pell-mell back into the debris-filled streets with even greater violence than at first, wrecking, devouring and tangling the pile of ruins.

In this sudden reappearance of the storm Jake Hatfield was knocked down by a flying timber, pinned beneath twisted steel and broken planks. Both Coleman and Wathena, too, were caught and were lying somewhere in the wreckage.

Presently, from among a pile of boxes, beds, clothing, chairs and crushed store-shelving, Coleman emerged with an Indian baby in his arms. Struck down, almost uncon-

scious, yet when he saw a heavy window frame falling upon the child, he had deliberately thrown himself in its way that the little Indian life might be saved. When he came out of the wreckage the window glass was broken, but the frame was swung about his neck. With badly bruised face, torn hands, his clothing in shreds, he deposited the Indian baby in a place of safety, then pulled and tore at timbers to release other unfortunates.

Seeing Coleman, Hatfield cried out, "Coleman, Coleman, I'm hurt!" In response to Hatfield's pleading, Coleman rushed over to the one whose monstrous, wicked soul knew no law, nor had the slightest care or respect for human justice. "Sure, Jake, I'll help you," Roger said earnestly, as he tugged away at lumber that pinned Hatfield's body to the ground.

"Wait! Don't!" groaned the fallen autocrat.

Coleman moved another timber.

"Oh, oh! It's killing me!"

Coleman moved more planks.

"Don't!" shrieked Hatfield. "It's cutting my stomach!"

"Where are you hurt, Jake?"

"Oh, here—there—everywhere! I can't move! Help me! Please—please, Coleman—I'm dying."

"Can't you move your leg, Jake?"

"No—I can't!"

Clearing the wreckage from Hatfield's body, Coleman lifted him up, and, aided by Tate Wheeler, he carried Jake into the drug store, one of the few buildings left standing in the path of the storm. Here Doctor Justice was unscathed, and working furiously in aiding the wounded victims. As Coleman laid Hatfield on the floor, he was a pitiful and pathetic figure, who realized his end was near. "I'm done for, Coleman. I guess my life

wasn't worth much, after all," he said in a trembling voice.

"Come on now, Jake. We will do everything we can for you. Brace up," Coleman tried to encourage him.

"No, no!" he replied. "I'm done for. Help me! Won't someone help me? God, forgive me, please have mercy on me!" Gasping for breath, clutching at his throat, he made a feeble attempt to rise, but fell back, crying out, "Don't let them burn me. Coleman! Coleman! Hold me! Oh, God, can You forgive me?" His lips were turning blue, his eyes were swollen, blood covered his face and his voice growing weaker, as breath left his body he was whispering a prayer to God.

This was the passing of Jake Hatfield.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE storm had swept through Kozart like a great scythe. The violent wind made doors useless, locks of no avail. Window frames, twisted furniture, broken glass, crushed automobiles, split and shattered timbers, dead and wounded bodies filled the streets for many blocks, leaving only the City Drug Store building, the Kozart Hospital, the Episcopal Church and the *Herald* Building intact. To these the dead and wounded were taken.

"Where is Wathena?" Coleman asked anxiously.

"Lord! I don't know, Roger. In the debris, I suppose! She ran out the door as the front windows smashed in," said Justice.

Until now no rain had fallen, but following great leaping flashes of lightning and sharp claps of cannon-like thunder, hail-stones and torrents of rain began to fall, and in the face of this new handicap Coleman dashed back into the street and began to remove planks, tables, automobile fenders and masses of debris that had been piled high by the mighty twister.

"Wathena! Wathena!" he called desperately.

There was no response.

Aided by Tate Wheeler, who had survived the storm, Roger continued to push away the debris, clambering over the twisted mass in search of the girl he loved.

"Look! There!" said Wheeler.

"Where?" Coleman asked, as he whirled.

"There!" said Wheeler, pointing to Wathena's dress.

It took Coleman only a second to realize that Wathena was partly buried beneath plaster and a fallen wall that lay up against high-piled debris.

"Dead! My Wathena dead!" groaned Coleman, trying to plough his way through wreckage and plaster. Then suddenly he felt a movement on the other side of the wall, arresting his attention. It moved again, and from out the mass of boards, bricks, pipe and glass came Chuckwood's voice:

"Mebbe so Wathena safe. Me hold roof. Heap hurry!"

Chuckwood had fallen on his hands and knees, and had taken the chance of death to save Wathena as the plaster came down upon them.

Carefully Coleman drew the girl's apparently lifeless form from under the fallen roof, and tenderly held her in his arms, hoping against hope that she was still alive. "Unconscious, badly hurt," he thought, as he lifted her gently, perceiving she was limp and scarcely breathing. "Not dead! Thank God!"

Chuckwood freed himself, and together they bore Wathena to the drug store, thence to the hospital that had withstood the storm. Then the old Indian slipped away, leaving Coleman alone with Wathena as he tenderly laid her upon a bed. He spent the night by her side, hoping every moment to hear her speak, or to see her open her eyes. When morning came and Doctor Justice said the injuries to her body were slight, Coleman's heart was filled with gratitude. But, upon removing a part of the bandages from her face, it was apparent that her sight was impaired.

Lowering the window shade and cutting out the light, Doctor Justice asked, "How do you feel, Wathena?"

"I have no pain, Doctor," she softly replied.

Justice bit his lip. Then he and Coleman departed, but that afternoon they came back, and it was heart-choking to Roger as she raised her hand to her face and gently aided the doctor in removing the gauze from her eyes only to cry, "Oh, Roger dear, I can't see you! I'm blind!"

His eyes filled with tears. He tenderly took her hand, then pushed her golden curls from about her ears, saying, "You will be all right, darling. It's only the shock of the storm, and the dirt that got in your eyes. Please don't worry."

"No! No! It feels like lime. I'm blind. I feel it. I know it!" She turned her head toward the wall, and between sobs cried out, "Please leave me now. I must be alone."

As they walked downtown, the doctor said, "Do you know, Roger, a man's heart simply leaps to his throat when he looks upon such a pitiful scene. Yet, though it's a hard thing to say, this storm was in one way the best thing that ever happened to Kozart. I can only feel sorry for Wathena. But few of the good people were injured. It was the half-breeds and bandits who were killed. Thank God you are saved!"

"It is good of you to say that, Doctor. But I love Wathena, and it will break my heart if she does not regain her eyesight. Don't tell her how serious it is."

"Certainly not. But if it's lime—and I'm afraid it is—her eyes are gone," Justice replied sadly.

Meanwhile, by one of those incomprehensible miracles which come only through the hand of God, the ruse ballot boxes arranged by the Hatfield followers, giving Bob Blackburn the election, had been blown away, and the hail and the rain storm which followed had completely de-

stroyed them, while side by side the original ballot boxes containing all legitimate votes cast, were found beneath a pile of timber, still intact and unsoiled, not a drop of water having touched them. When opened and the votes counted in the presence of Coleman and several business men, the result stood: Coleman, one thousand and seven; Blackburn, thirty-six.

Roger had turned red terror into white fear, had brought order and economic revival out of the dust and din of the Hatfield machine, and had been the means of starting an impetus for commercial renaissance. The real dictatorship was to succeed because there had arisen among them a man so strong in character, so devoted to principle, so untiring and alert in his efforts to protect the weak, and so forceful in his personality as to utilize constructively the power and privileges of willful and inept majorities. And, apart from his courageous fight, he had been aided by the elements at the crucial hour.

The Hatfield mansion was no more. The place had been wrecked, torn to pieces; while the grounds were a tangled mass of vines, of broken shrubbery, and the spacious lawn was strewn with boards, vases and shattered statuary.

Coleman was made chairman of the relief committee. The building occupied by the Kozart *Herald* remained standing, and since Tate Wheeler, one of the survivors of the Hatfield group, was converted by the storm and the strange turn of events, he immediately placed the morning paper at Coleman's disposal.

On the front page the following day, the *Herald* carried this announcement: "I thank you from the depths of my heart for the confidence you have shown in me. I bear malice toward none. Let us all strive to forgive and forget any wrong inflicted upon any of us. Let us pull to-

gether as one to build a newer, cleaner, and finer Kozart than ever—one that our state and nation may be proud to know. God aid us to do right and to progress, and God grant that those who have accumulated money or property in a deceptive and selfish way will return to the Indians what is their own, that I may not be forced to enter into a prosecution for such acts. Roger Coleman.”

Coleman had weathered the most serious political storm ever known in the Indian country. His stamina, courage, valor, the justice in his heart, and the Osage blood in his veins helped him on to victory. The fact that his investigation began while the Hatfield machine was at the peak of its power made him stand out in the eyes of politicians and business men as a colossus, incarnating an authority never before approached by any government man sent on such a mission. And out of his work was to spring a new power in the Kozart country. Besides, it meant the awakening of the entire population of the state,—in behalf of protecting and aiding the starving and struggling Indian people.

Under Coleman’s leadership, foundations for gigantic business structures, beautiful schools and various churches were laid almost over night. And even the majority of the Hatfield followers who had survived the storm were joining his forces and beginning to aid him.

He made daily visits to the hospital in which Wathena lay, and constantly reassured her of his love and devotion. Her noble qualities, her beauty of character and her unselfishness, were continually revealed, for in this crucial moment, when she learned Hatfield had been killed, she whispered to Coleman:

“Dear, you must release Edna.”

The mention of Edna seemed distasteful to Coleman. “Don’t worry about that woman, darling,” he said. “Just

think about your little self. Hurry up and get well so that we can be married."

"But Edna is all alone now, Roger," she said sadly.

"Yes, I know she is, sweetheart."

"No father, no mother. Won't you please release her?" she pleaded.

"Edna is in safe hands, darling, and has been all along. Davis has seen to that. So let's not talk about it. I don't want to think of that woman."

"Will Mr. Davis release her?"

"Listen, darling," Roger said firmly. "Davis released Edna the day following the storm. She returned to Kozart, saw the stricken town, her home in ruins, and her father dead. Yet the tragedy apparently brought that woman no remorse. In fact, her failure in her selfish pursuit, the thought of being a victim of her own fallacy, made her bitter and resentful. Her heredity still dominates, and she has ordered all of her father's holdings sold, intent upon going to France, where in the gay and frivolous night-life of Paris, she may lose all memory of the past. That's where she belongs, so please don't mention her again."

"All right, Roger, but I don't see how you can love me now," Wathena said in a pathetic whisper, as she extended her hand to feel for his.

"But I do, darling," he said, clasping her hand.

"You are sure, Roger?"

Leaning over closely, he put one hand beneath her head and the other against her cheek, then kissed her tenderly, saying, "Sweetheart, there are just two things I am looking forward to—your getting well and our getting married."

"How can you be happy with a blind girl?" she asked in a trembling voice, and tried hard to open her eyes. But

they refused her. Then she turned her head toward the wall, covered her face with both hands, and cried, "Oh, if I could only see the sunlight, and just look into your eyes once, I would be so happy, Roger dear."

"It isn't your eyes, Wathena, nor any of the charms which enshrine you that I worship, but it is your character, your beautiful spirit, your noble soul and your purity that I love. Let nothing worry you, sweetheart. You shall have a home, a car, a man to drive it, and I shall take you with me wherever I go."

Three weeks elapsed. Then Wathena was taken to her cottage, where the damage done by the storm had been repaired. Daily she was visited by many people, who showered her with flowers and little tokens of esteem, and wished her happiness and that her sight would be restored, for they had learned to love her. It was now publicly known that she and Coleman were to be married on Christmas Eve.

Chuckwood was a constant guardian in her home. One afternoon while she was sitting on her front porch listening to him relating tales of the territorial days, Coleman drove up, leaped from his car, bounded to the porch, and greeted her with eager kisses. Then turning to the Indian hermit, he said, "Chuckwood, I want you to dress up Christmas Eve."

"Ugh!" was the Indian's reply.

"Yes, sir, Chuckwood, we must have you all 'dolled up."

"Me dress up! Heap Chuckwood—no!" shaking his head.

"But you've got to put on a tuxedo, Chuckwood. You can still nod, shake your head, grunt, move your eyes. But you must dress up at our wedding," Coleman insisted.

Chuckwood grinned. "Ugh! Mebbe so me look heap funny tuxo-do."

Then Wathena arose, extended her hand, and stepped toward Chuckwood, whose hand clasped hers. With the other she reached toward the old warrior's neck, saying, "I have a secret, Chuckwood."

Chuckwood bent low, but instead of whispering in his ear, she kissed the wrinkled cheek, and said, "Please dress up for my sake, Chuckwood."

Touched by Wathena's voice and caress, the old fellow said, "Mebbe so, heap Chuckwood love Wathena. Mebbe heap Chuckwood put on tuxo-do." And his broad grin widened even more. He blinked his eyes and chuckled out, "Mebbe so heap Chuckwood have heap fun."

CHAPTER XXXVI

FOR two days preceding Christmas a blinding storm swept over the Kozart country, leaving the trees bending with ice and snow. Yet the eventful morning itself broke clear and serene. Soon the radiating sunshine was melting snow and ice, and bringing the soft magic of crinkling icicles as they fell from the eaves of houses and the branches of trees.

The streets downtown were decorated in the spirit of Yuletide, with cedars, festoons, myriads of brilliant incandescent lights strung above the sidewalk. Even the old men and the Indian squaws, bent with toil and sorrow, their thin, parchment-like faces veiled with shawls, and their hands outstretched for any little token that the passersby might give them, were now part of the motley crowd, with happy faces, jamming together in holiday spirit, like children with a pile of toys around them.

Thinking of his own life, of the struggle and the sorrow he had endured, made Roger Coleman's soul throb with sympathy for his fellowmen. And since he had attained great financial success, as well as a victory for the people, he had laid his plans for a magnificent Christmas tree downtown, where he was to distribute thousands of dollars' worth of wood, clothing and other things that would gladden the hearts of the needy.

The tree was set up at Main and Broadway, and gorgeously trimmed. Peeping out from among the glistening gold and silver tinsel were hundreds of tiny colored electric bulbs. At the base of the tree were crimson jackets,

drums, Teddy bears, puzzles and games, jumping-jacks and talking dolls, piles of bright Christmas packages, and a dazzling array of other toys.

From his headquarters in Washington Captain Mitchell and his wife had come to attend Coleman's wedding. On the wedding day Mrs. Mitchell and Mrs. Justice were busy assisting Wathena with her trousseau, and, despite the girl's blindness, her heart throbbed ecstatically as she talked of the wedding hour, and was told of the beautiful decorations in the church where the ceremony was to be performed.

"Oh, I am so happy!" she said.

"Roger is a wonderful man," Mrs. Justice returned.

"This seems like a dream to me, and all that I can hope is that Roger will never tire of me," Wathena said softly.

"Tire of you, dear? Impossible," Mrs. Justice assured her.

"Oh, I shouldn't think of such a thing, I know," Wathena added. "He loves me, and I know it, and I am happy." Then she felt her way over to the organ, and played joyously a few strains of the wedding march.

"Captain Mitchell says Roger is the finest man he has ever known," interpolated Mrs. Mitchell.

"One out of a thousand," Mrs. Justice agreed.

But while Wathena was as playful as a child, feeling of the soft satin gown she was to wear, contented and happy, and apparently never before filled with such joy, a cloud of gloom spread over Roger Coleman's face as he recalled the frenzied events of the past months.

He had gone downtown at noon, and for some moments stood gazing up at the majestic Christmas tree. Then he went on to Doctor Justice's store and sat down to talk with him.

"I can't understand my feeling," said Coleman, as they sat in the doctor's office.

"What is your trouble?" asked Justice in surprise.

"I fear something is going to happen."

"Oh, it's only imagination."

"I hope so, Doctor, but it's a peculiar feeling. And I tell you, no one can trust bandits. Hatfield had many friends in the Kozart country, and I feel that there is an undercurrent planning a crime."

"Do you want guards at the wedding?"

Coleman hesitated a moment before answering. Then he said, "Yes, perhaps. But surely no one will attempt to bring grief to Wathena, she has had such a struggle all her life. But read this, Doc. It's enough to make me worry for Wathena's sake," he added as he handed over a letter.

"SIR:

Your time has come. I am going to blow up the church the night of your wedding.

THE ANARCHIST."

Justice quickly scanned the note.

"When did you get this?" he inquired.

"Three days ago."

"Why have you gone ahead with the plans?"

"You mean at the church?"

"Yes. Some fanatic may try to carry out the threat."

"Well, Doc, I've done my duty, and I am not afraid to die."

"But what of Wathena?"

"I told her about the message."

"You did!"

"Yes, I read it to her."

"What did she say?" quizzed Justice as he read the anonymous message a second time.

"She only smiled, and said she was not afraid."

"It didn't excite her?"

"Not a bit, Doc. There is the bravest, truest, and most wonderful woman I have ever known."

"Then you expect to go through with the original plans?"

"Yes, it's Wathena's wish."

"All right. I'll be there. And if the church goes up, we will all go together," said Justice resolutely.

The day passed quickly. The Episcopal Church, its interior blooming with flowers and holiday decorations, was the setting for the wedding, and so eager was everyone to see the man who had waged the valiant fight for justice to the Indians that long before the appointed hour for the ceremony, automobiles filled with people, lined the streets in front of the church. Everyone who could afford it and who could find one, had brought a bouquet to the church, and there was a sort of kaleidoscopic cacaphony that broke the silence of the hour. Small cedars and pine-tree branches, southern smilax and poinsettias made up artistic wreaths that blended into gorgeous horseshoes over the entrance.

The walls of the building were decked with massive hearts made from mistletoe and holly leaves, their centers pierced by bouquets of poinsettias direct from California gardens. On each side and at equal distances apart along the side wall of the church stood tall, slender cedar trees trimmed and aglow with soft lights, spangles, silver tinsel and iridescent ornaments.

The altar was a bank of lilies, clusters of white roses and white chrysanthemums, with more chrysanthemums, long-stemmed and gorgeous in tall jardinieres on each side. The aisle through which the bride and groom were to pass was strewn with roses, and fastened to each pew was a wreath of holly.

An enormous Christmas tree with beautiful decorations stood back of the spacious altar, a spectacle in itself. The tiny electric bulbs that illuminated it pierced the center of masses of orange blossoms made into the shape of exquisite roses; in fact, the fragrant flowers that Coleman had ordered from Florida and California made the setting for the ceremony more beautiful and elaborate than any hitherto known in the state.

Huge snowmen with electrically lighted eyes and big, wide mouths that held tiny American flags and long eagle feathers, stood as guardians over the foyer, and in their hands they clasped large red lanterns that gave added cheer to the Christmas scene.

Every seat in the church was filled, and all available standing room occupied. Among the assembled guests were many Indians, some in civilian attire, while others with stoical faces were wearing their richest regalia.

Presently two luxurious sedans rolled up in front of the church, and from them alighted the bridal party. Then as the soft and melodious strains of Mendelssohn's Wedding March came from the organ, and the chimes of the majestic tower resounded through the church, Roger, accompanied by his best man, Arthur Davis, took his place at the altar, while down the aisle came the little flower girls, tiny twins, nieces of Davis. They were immediately followed by Mrs. Oliver Justice, wearing a beautiful frock of orchid chiffon, enhanced with gold lace, and a picture-hat of orchid and gold. On her arm she carried a bouquet of sweet peas. Mrs. Lonnie Mitchell wore a velvet gown of delicate blue embroidered in silver, and carried a bouquet of cape jasmine and southern smilax.

Next came the bride on Doctor Justice's arm. She was beautiful in shimmering ivory satin, with rose-point lace. Her veil of silk tulle was dotted with sprays of

lilies-of-the-valley. It was rucked high at the back of her head and held gracefully in place by a coronet of delicate filigree. In her slender, sensitive hands she carried a shower bouquet of fragrant orange blossoms and lilies-of-the-valley.

Then came Captain Lonnie Mitchell in military attire, and beside him, marching in stoical majesty, the Indian hermit, Chuckwood, wearing the much-discussed tuxedo.

As the bride and groom took their positions at the altar, there were tears in many eyes. Wathena was charming, beautiful—but blind. And while Coleman stood firm and swimming with the tide of popular approval, yet his supreme love, loyalty and devotion to Wathena touched every heart.

Just as the marriage rites were being read, two stealthy forms raised their heads to peer cautiously through a window near the altar, and two pairs of bloodshot eyes fixed themselves malevolently upon the group facing the minister. They had been unnoticed by the guards, who were themselves engrossed in another strange figure who had emerged from a car outside and was making his way to the door. Could Coleman have looked through the window and seen the eyes, he would have recognized the murderous intent and become alarmed for the safety of Wathena.

Clutching a deadly bomb, one of the men flexed his arm to hurl it through the window into the crowd, where it would bring death to perhaps a score and injury to many others. But just as he gathered strength for the throw, Wathena turned her lovely sightless face so the light shone brightly upon it, and the anarchist, startled and dismayed, halted his fatal gesture. His own flesh and blood; God! What was he doing? Overwhelmed with remorse, his

eyes filled with tears. Turning abruptly, he flung the bomb into a melting snowbank, motioned to his partner, and they disappeared.

It was Frank Peterson who had intended to hurl the bomb into the church, and his partner was Pete Novak, the disreputable half-breed who had been captured the day Hickey was found. Two weeks after the tornado and the announcement of Coleman's election, Chuckwood had released these men and brought them to Coleman's office, where they were allowed to choose between standing trial for blackmail and murder, or confessing and submitting to terms in prison. The men chose the latter alternative, but, cunning and desperate, with revenge in their hearts, they had made their escape and returned to Kozart, determined to assassinate Coleman. It was Peterson who had written the threatening letter, and Novak was his aide. Peterson, however, inured as he was to crime, had not reckoned with the hand of fate, and what the effect of seeing Wathena blind would be upon his determination.

In the meantime, all were unconscious of the tense drama outside the church and a miracle at hand within.

As the ring was placed upon Wathena's finger and the minister pronounced the couple man and wife, there was a rustle at the doorway, and all eyes suddenly turned to stare at Chief Bearskin, who, in his most elaborate buckskin, fringe, beads and feathers, had entered the church. His wrinkled face was noble and impressive, as he strode down the pathway of roses and mounted the altar. A tense stillness gripped the assemblage as he advanced to Wathena, and said, in an audible tone:

"Wathena, dear, God said there should be light."

"Yes," she replied softly.

